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SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
RELATING TO THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION;
WHEREIN
THE NATURE, END, AND DESIGN
OF
CHRISTIANITY,
AS WELL AS THE
PRINCIPAL EVIDENCE
OF THE TRUTH OF IT, ARE EXPLAINED AND RECOM-
MENDED OUT OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES;
WITH A GENERAL APPEAL TO THE EXPERIENCE OF
ALL MEN FOR CONFIRMATION THEREOF.
IN THREE PARTS.
BY ALEXANDER ARSCOTT.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself,
1 JOHN, Chap. v. Ver. 10.

THE THIRD EDITION.

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THE
P R E F A C E.

THE following sheets were written in performance of what I have long believed to be my duty: I have chosen this time to do it, because of that liberty which has been of late taken with the Christian Religion: it being evident beyond dispute, that infidelity, with a train of many other evils, which are the natural effects of it, has very much prevailed in this nation; and thereby the minds of people, being freed from those restraints which religion would put upon them, are become vitiated, and consequently their conversations turned into such a channel of looseness and impiety, that makes it at least, I hope, excusable in any one who has the good of mankind, especially of his own countrymen, sincerely at heart, to endeavour, according to the best of his judgment and understanding, to obviate these evils.

And this, I can honestly say, is the single view I have in my thus appearing, being

right sensible, that unless it shall please God, in his wisdom and providence, kindly to interpose, to turn the hearts of men into another way of thinking than at present they seem disposed to, as we cannot but observe the evils already introduced into the Christian world, so it gives us the most sorrowful prospect what will become of the next and future generations, which I doubt not but he will do, if men do but rightly apply to him ; but if they refuse or neglect his help, their destruction will be of themselves, though their help is only in him.

To direct to this help, both for the right understanding the necessary truths of Christianity, and practising accordingly, is the chief design of the following pages. The method of doing this is, first, by shewing out of the Holy Scriptures, what the Christian Religion was in its primitive state, and what was the principal evidence of it to the first believers. And secondly, what it is, or ought to be now, and what the principal evidence to us of this generation : and for proof of this last, which most nearly concerns us, I appeal to every man's own experience, which, if duly regarded, will confirm to him the truth of the Christian Religion as here described.

All this I have drawn from the Scriptures themselves, without regard to the particular systems of any sect or party of men.

For

For this may be observed, that some of those who have writ against our holy religion, as well as in the defence of it, have not clearly defined what they mean by it. But the one have directed their arrows against some supposed abuses (which perhaps may be real occasions of complaint) and have managed their arguments in such manner, as to wound the cause of religion in general, through the sides of those concerned in such supposed abuses. On the other hand, some of those, who have writ in defence of religion, seem to have more regard to the particular system they are in the possession of, and to support a particular set of ceremonies, and certain forms and orders of men, than the cause of the Christian Religion in general; I say, some of the late defenders of our holy religion are thus engaged (for I would not be understood to think the same of all); and wherever this is the case, the cause of Christianity, as to the true nature, end, and design of it, is very little promoted.

To avoid being diverted or biaſſed by any errors of this nature or tendency, I was resolved in the writing these considerations, to have recourse to no other book but my bible; which has obliged me to make considerable collections from thence, to shew what the Christian Religion was in its original constitution, &c. which seems to be at present too much neglected; in which, I
fear,

fear, I shall not be quite acceptable to some of the curious palates of this age, who cannot well relish any thing of this kind, but are better pleased with some fine spun modern compositions, which have very little relation to that sacred book. I have only this to request of such as these, and of my readers in general; first, that they will have patience to peruse the whole, before they pass their censure on any particular parts of it; and for the better judging the truth of that system of religion herein recommended, I desire them to compare it with the accounts of the Christian doctrines contained in the Holy Scriptures, and their own experience; in which last I doubt not, but they will find such traces or footsteps, as, if rightly pursued, will effectually confirm to them the truth of the whole. And as herein I have recommended to mankind the teachings and instruction of the Divine Spirit, so I now recommend the reader to the same in the perusal of it.

T H E

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SOME

SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
RELATING TO THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

C H A P. I.

*Of the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and the
Miracles of Christ and his Apostles, considered as
Evidences of the Christian Religion.*

HAVING observed, with a sorrowful concern of mind, that the Christian religion has been of late years, with more freedom than at any time since the reformation from Popery, debated and called in question, as to the evidence and certainty of it, and that in an artful concealed manner, by some who pretend to be its friends and advocates; it has led me into a serious consideration, wherein the principal evidence of our holy religion consists; and how a man may attain to such a certainty respecting it, as to be well satisfied in himself, and able, if required, to render to others a reason of his belief. And having, as I think, met with that satisfaction as hath put the matter out of

all question with myself, there seems to be some constraint on my mind to communicate the same to the publick; if by any means I may be instrumental to preserve some, who may be in danger of falling from their stedfastness in the faith of the gospel; or to restore others, who may be already in any degree prevailed on to question the truth of it, by the cunning craftiness of those who lie in wait to deceive.

But before I enter upon what I have in view, I would premise, that it is not my design to mention particularly the proofs of the Christian religion, arising from the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the miracles of our Lord and his apostles recorded in the New: these being undertaken by others, to whom I refer my reader, only take liberty to make one or two short observations. As to the first, the prophecies of the Messiah recorded in the Old Testament appear to be well understood by the Jewish converts of that generation, to relate to our Lord Jesus Christ, and were therefore made use of to that end, as a good argument, *ad hominem*, to that people: and from thence we have good reason to believe them, without those unnecessary critical remarks and distinctions which have of late appeared in the world; inasmuch as we may well suppose, that the Jews of that generation better understood these prophecies of their own prophets, and the true intent and design of them, than we at this distance of time, and of the race of the Gentiles, can reasonably be supposed to do. That the scriptures of the Old Testament were thus applied, and that with success, appears from many instances, though it must be confessed they had not always the like success; which it may be observed did arise, not from any defect in the prophecies themselves, but

but from an evil disposition of mind some were under, which hindered them from a sincere honest inquiry into the truth and pertinency of them, which others, being better disposed, were confirmed in.

A remarkable instance of this, is that of the Jews of Berea, of whom it was said, Acts xvii. *They were more noble than those of Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.* Where it is observable, first, the different conduct of the Berean and Thessalonian Jews; for concerning these last it is said, that Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath-days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and that this Jesus whom he preached unto them, is Christ: and the effect was, some of them believed; but others, not only believed not, but being moved with envy (a very unfit disposition of mind to give the apostle a fair hearing), a spirit of persecution entered them, in which they assaulted the house of Jason, where the apostle lodged; which ill temper of mind was no doubt the cause, that the apostle's reasoning out of the scripture had no better effect on them: whereas the Bereans, being much better disposed, received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily; which implies not a slight way of doing it, but carefulness and constancy: and the effect was, many of them believed (more we may well suppose than of the Thessalonians) to which no doubt but their careful searching the scriptures very much contributed; the holy spirit opening their understandings, and working in them a willingness, or readiness of mind, to receive the truth in the love of it: from all which, I draw

this general conclusion, *that to search the scriptures with an honest well-disposed mind, is a very good means which God hath ordained, for receiving and believing the truth of the Christian religion.*

Again, the miracles of our Lord and his apostles were good helps ordained of God, for the introducing the belief of the Christian religion into the world; and it appears that they were often made instrumental to that end; though not always alike successful. For as it was in the case of the scriptures, so it was in the case of miracles, they were more or less successful as they met with a better or worse disposition of mind, in those who were witnesses of them. Though this may be observed in general of them that opposed the miracles of our Lord and his apostles, that none of them denied the reality of the facts (as some of late have done), but endeavoured, under various pretences, to frustrate the influence of them on the minds of the people, for their reception of the doctrine of the gospel.

Some, which were the worst of all, attributed the miracles of our Lord to a diabolical power, saying, "*He casteth out devils by Belzebub the prince of devils.*" These not only received no benefit by them, but met with a most severe rebuke from our Lord himself; which ought to be matter of caution and warning to those who endeavour to make void the truth and reality of the miracles of Christ, or any other facts, which have the evidence of a divine power attending them; as well as to those who countenance or encourage such an attempt. Others did not attribute them to a diabolical power, but yet being determined, contrary to the convictions of their own minds, to oppose and hinder, as much as in them lay, the progress of that work he was engaged

gaged in, viz. The conversion of the people to the Christian faith; sometimes opposed them under pretence of the publick good, as when our Lord had raised Lazarus from the dead, it is said, John xi. *Some of them went their way to the Pharisees, and told them what things Jesus had done: then gathered the chief priests and Pharisees a council, and said, what do we? for this man doth many miracles: if we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and nation.*

Here was first a plain and full acknowledgment of the reality of the facts, in these words: *This man doth many miracles:* and yet instead of believing on him, and regarding that divine power by which he was acted in the working of them, they, under the specious pretence of danger from a foreign power, endeavoured to stir up the people against him: sometimes under no pretence at all, but only for the sake of opposition, as in the case mentioned Acts iii. where Peter restored the lame man to soundness, by calling to him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, *Rise up and walk:* which being publickly done, was publickly and fully acknowledged, even by those, who notwithstanding opposed the progress of the apostle's doctrine: Acts iv. *For beholding the man that was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it; but when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they considered among themselves saying, What shall we do with these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them, is manifest to all men that dwell at Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it: but that it spread no farther among the people, let us straitway threaten them that they speak henceforth to no man in this name.* The terms in which this relation is expressed, are evidently such as cannot be

applied to any other, than a real matter of fact, and acknowledged as such by those who were enemies to the faith of the gospel ; who therefore, as they opposed the publishers of it, under such clear confessed evidence, must be self-condemned.

There were a third sort, who went farther than these, and yet had not the full benefit of the miracles of Christ, &c. which were those who acknowledged not only the truth and the reality of the works, but an extraordinary mission and qualification in the person working them ; and yet going no farther, these did not receive the end intended fully : of this sort was Nicodemus, who made this ingenuous free confession, *viz.* John iii. *Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these works which thou doest, except God be with him.* Which, one would think at first view, should have been sufficient to entitle him to a full discipleship, to a place in the kingdom of God ; but our Lord, who knew his heart, told him there was something wanting in order to that : *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again (or from above) he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, (or cannot see the kingdom) :* as much as if he had said, From the mighty works thou hast observed me to do, thou confessest that I am a teacher come from God, and thou doest well so far ; but except thou go farther, this confession will be of no service to thee, except thou becomeest a witness of the same power in measure, by which I work those mighty works ; and thereby be partaker of a new nature, which will make thee a new man, created anew in righteousness and holiness, in which the kingdom of God, which I am come to establish, consists. Thy confession will not give thee a place in that kingdom, and therefore, if thou wilt receive the right and true benefit

benefit of these my mighty works, believe in that power, a measure of which is in thee, and in all men, and is given for that end, to bring forth in them this new birth; which is in truth as much a miracle, though it does not so directly fall under the notice of the outward senses, as those mighty works which were wrought by our Lord and his apostles, and is the principal end and design of them; and this good effect the miracles had in many, who by these means believed on him, and were really converted in heart and spirit, and obtained a place in the kingdom of God, by attending not only to the miracles themselves, but also, and principally, to that power by which they were wrought, as might appear by many instances.

From all which I draw this general conclusion, that miracles were a means in the hand of God, not only of convincing men of the truth of our Lord's divine mission, &c. but of converting those who duly regarded the divine power by which they were wrought, unto the true faith of the gospel, by which their hearts were purified, and all the good fruits and effects agreeable were brought forth; of which miracles were often the remote cause, by raising the attention, and begetting a favourable reception of the doctrines and precepts delivered by him that was endued with that power. But the principal and immediate cause which rendered these and all other external means effectual, for the right receiving and believing the truths of the gospel, was the Spirit of God opening the understanding, and working a right disposition of mind for these ends. And this was the reason of the different effect of miracles on those who were witnesses of them: some only regarding the miracles themselves as outward acts; and the effect as to these was no more, but to beget an admiration of them,

as of something extraordinary; and their attention terminating there, they received no real profit or benefit by them. Others believing a divine power attended them who wrought those mighty works, and therefore giving credit to the doctrines delivered by them, the good spirit of God disposing them thereto, were really converted unto the faith through that occasion. Thus miracles, as outward acts, had a relation to inward and spiritual effects, and so far may have a spiritual application; but from thence to represent them as only true, in a spiritual or allegorical sense, as some of late have done, is manifestly contrary to the nature and design of them, which was to rouse the attention to things spiritual; and inconsistent with the accounts we have of them in the holy scriptures, and tends to make void the good ends of the gospel, which depends on the truth and reality of the whole, as related by the evangelists and sacred writers, more especially that greatest of all miracles, *the resurrection of our Lord from the dead*; whereby a substantial foundation of faith in God, through Jesus Christ, was laid (of which, and the blessed effects of it more particularly hereafter); and therefore to endeavour to make void the truth and reality of it, is to make void the faith of the gospel itself, according to the express words of the apostle, 1 Cor. xv. *If Christ be not risen, our preaching is vain, and your faith is also vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

C H A P. II.

A summary Account what the Christian Religion was in its primitive State, as the same is delivered in the Holy Scriptures.

HAVING said thus much by way of testimony, in behalf of these two great evidences of Christianity, viz. the prophecies of the prophets, and the miracles of Christ and his apostles; I shall proceed to treat of an evidence, which appears to me greater than these, and yet more neglected; arising from the nature of the Christian Religion itself, and the influence it has, where it is rightly understood and received, on the minds of men; of which every man has, or may have a testimony in his own breast, which to him that attends to it, is certain and unquestionable. In order to it, I would, in the first place, lay before you briefly, and yet with as much clearness as I am capable, what the Christian religion is, as to its nature, end, and design, as the same is delivered in the holy scriptures; and what was the principal evidence of the truth of it to believers in the primitive times; and, in the next place, what is the principal evidence of the same to us in this generation.

Now, Christianity is a divine institution, by which God declares himself reconciled to mankind, for the sake, and on the account of, his beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he did and suffered for them, on condition of repentance, amendment of life, and perseverance in a state of holiness; for which end he also offers them the help of his grace and good spirit, which is sufficient for that end: all which taken together,

together may be called *salvation*; though, in a proper sense, salvation consists in the last, *viz.* in that help which men receive from the grace and good spirit of God, according to the words of the apostle, Rom. v. 10. *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God, by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* Again, Ephes. ii. 8. *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* Tit. iii. 5. *According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*

Now, by considering this distinction, it may be observed, that the Christian Religion, so far as concerns the great and good ends of its institution, consists of two parts; first, what our Lord Jesus Christ did and suffered for mankind in the days of his flesh without them: and, secondly, what he did, and continues to do for them, in them; or in other words, what they are enabled to do for themselves, through that help and assistance which he is pleased to afford them. The first includes the several particulars of his holy life, the good works which he wrought, in which he is our example; the miracles which he did for the confirmation of his doctrine and divine mission; his death, by which, through the appointment of God, he became a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of mankind; his resurrection, by which he was fully declared to be the Son of God with power; all which, though the effects of them are lasting and permanent, yet were then done once for all, and no more to be repeated. But the second, *viz.* what Christ does for mankind in them, or what they are enabled to do for themselves through his help, in order to repentance and conversion, and perseverance in a life of true piety and holiness. This being the
standing

standing experience of believers in him, throughout all generations, remains to be more particularly considered in this place, being that, whereby all the good ends of religion are answered to mankind: the first of these I call *the external historical part of Christianity*, the last, *the internal experimental part*. And though I consider them, for distinction sake, as two parts, yet as they have a near relation and dependence one upon the other, they are not to be divided in the influence they have on man's salvation, the one being the effect or consequence of the other: according to these scriptures, Tit. ii. 14. *He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works.* 2 Cor. v. 15. *He died for all, that they who live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.* So that all the blessings of the gospel, which are comprehended in these particulars, *remission of sins that are past, redemption from the power of it, being purified, sanctified, and justified*; all are conveyed to us by Jesus Christ, and are the effects and consequence of what he did and suffered in his own person, without us, but yet wrought in us by his good spirit; which I mention once for all, that when I speak of these experiences, it may be so understood.

Let us therefore now consider a little more particularly what a Christian life is, according to the account we have of it in the holy scriptures. He that with seriousness and attention reads the writings of the new testament, will find, that as the pollutions and defilements which men have contracted are in the heart, out of which, as out of a polluted fountain, they issue forth into words and actions; so it is the principal business of a Christian, when he becomes engaged in the
work

work of religion and godliness, to begin there first; to make clean the inside; to suppress the first motions and inclinations to evil, which arise in the heart; to regulate the mind with all its faculties and powers, which John the Baptist calls, Mat. iii. 10. *Laying the ax to the root of the tree*; which being in some good measure done, such may be safely trusted with respect to their outward actions. For all our actions being in conformity to the will, inclination, or desire of our minds; if these are taken off from things that are evil, and become rightly directed, that person cannot but in the general course of his actions, eschew evil (the desire after it being taken away), and pursue good; or in the words of our Lord, Mat. xii. 33. *Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good*: the whole conversation will be so. That this is the peculiar business of the Christian religion, where it takes place, will appear to any impartial person, who shall, with a sincere and honest mind, peruse the doctrines and precepts left us by our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles; and especially in that excellent part of them contained in the 5th, 6th, and 7th of Matthew.

I hope it will be readily allowed, that this work, if it can be effected, is a most excellent attainment. But some may say, it is more easy to write or speak of such a regulation of the mind, than to attain to it: I allow it, and will go so far in allowing of it, as to say, that as to any ability which we as men have, or can have of ourselves, it is impossible. And herein consists the excellency of the Christian Religion, that what is in itself otherwise impossible, according to the weak depraved state of our minds, God has made possible unto us, by affording us such help, as if rightly applied to, is sufficient for that end,

end. What that help is, by what means conveyed to us, and how to be made use of for this great and good purpose, I am next to speak to.

C H A P. III.

A further Account of the Christian Religion out of the Scriptures, particularly of that Help which the primitive Christians received for living a religious Life, and practising the Precepts of the Gospel.

IN order to the right understanding the nature of this help, let us again look back to what our Lord did for us in his appearance in the flesh; which will lead us to what he is now doing for us in spirit (the one, as I said, having a necessary relation to the other). After our Lord had done, and suffered in this life, according to the will of God; being at last offered up a sacrifice on the cross, by which he became a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; for the remission of sins that are past; there being something farther necessary, in order to our acceptance with God, *viz.* the delivering of us from the power of sin for the future, and bringing us up into a life of holiness, and preserving us in it; it being most reasonable to suppose, that God is no more reconciled to men in a sinful state of life, since the death of Christ, than he was before, sin being as much contrary to the purity of his nature since, as before; therefore for the rendering that work which our Lord came to do, complete, after having humbled himself unto death, he was again exalted, by being raised from the dead, through the power of the Father; thereby

thereby effectually declaring himself to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

Of this, as the apostles themselves were witnesses, so with holy confidence and assurance they built upon it, as a most sure foundation: and having at the same time, according to his promise, received the gift of the Holy Ghost, they went forth in the virtue thereof, and their preaching became powerful and effectual, to the converting multitudes to the faith of the gospel.

It is not my present intention, neither do I think it necessary, to use arguments to convince my reader of the truth of our Lord's resurrection; the account thereof, as delivered in scripture, being so convincing, that I know no matter of fact, at such a distance of time, better attested and confirmed to us. And many learned men having already collected the several proofs, and thereby established the truth of the fact beyond contradiction; my principal design at present is, to shew by instances from the holy scriptures, that the apostles in the first publication of the doctrines of the gospel, had constant reference to this as a foundation of faith, on which they themselves built, and on which they persuaded others to build also; as appears by the several short, but powerful sermons, which we have recorded in the Acts of the Apostles; and no doubt but this was the case wherever they preached, as also the same is to be observed in most of their epistles to the gathered churches: this article being made use of, as a suitable introduction, to establish the doctrines and precepts they were about to communicate to them. For what could be more reasonable? Being about to introduce a religion, the principal business of which was to give men power over their soul's enemies, the

world,

world, the flesh, and the devil; in which salvation consists: to let them see, that the author of that salvation was all powerful, having himself overcome death, and him that had the power of it, which is the devil.

But this foundation, however good, is but a foundation, and something is to be built upon it. What is that? Believing in him; and in that faith, receiving the gifts of his holy spirit, which were repentance and conversion, and turning from the evil of their ways: *Unto you first*, (says the Apostle Peter, Acts iii. 16.) *God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning every one of you from his iniquities.* Acts v. 31, 32. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins: and we are his witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost also, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Here was a testimony to the power of Christ's resurrection, as well as a two-fold evidence of the coming of Christ, and the blessed effects of it, *viz.* that of the apostles, who were themselves witnesses of what they preached; and that of the Holy Ghost, which God gave, not only to the apostles, though to them in a very eminent degree, to fit them for the great work in which they were engaged; but also to all those who obeyed him, that is, all believers in Christ through their preaching; which last was an internal evidence, manifesting itself in the hearts of those which had it.

Nor was this the peculiar privilege of the Jews, though to them it was first preached; but was extended to the Gentiles also: as, first, in that memorable instance of Cornelius, upon which occasion, Peter introduces what he had to say, with this general confession or acknowledgment,

viz.

viz. Acts x. Of a truth I perceive, that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him. And having in the progress of his discourse, preached Christ crucified, and raised from the dead, &c. we find what the effect was; while Peter yet spake the words, The Holy Ghost fell on all those that heard the word. And when Peter was brought under some reprehension by the Jews, on this account, that he went in unto men uncircumcised, and did eat with them; after having rehearsed the whole matter, he concludes, Forasmuch then, as God gave the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

This was the good effect of their conversion, as the same apostle farther explains it, chap. xv. when another dispute having arisen about circumcision, Peter rose up, and said unto them, referring no doubt to this passage, *Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.* Here again was an inward as well as outward testimony to the truths of the gospel preached by the apostle, *viz.* God who knew the sincerity of their hearts, testifying to them inwardly, by the Holy Ghost which he gave them, by which he enlarged their understandings, and wrought in them a willingness to receive and believe the gospel; the effects of which, was repentance unto life, and a purifying
or

or cleansing the heart by faith. All which implies an inward work in the mind, known and experienced by the help of the Holy Spirit, which bore witness with their spirit to the truth of the word preached, in that work of repentance and purification which it wrought.

And this was henceforward extended unto the Gentiles, as well as the Jews; though as the first publishers of the gospel were of the stock of Abraham, their brethren of that nation had for a time the preference where they came; as appears in their preaching the word at Antioch, at Athens, at Rome, &c. At the first of these places, chap. xiii. after the apostle having recounted the mercies of God to the Jews in general, from ver. 16. to 26. and by way of complaint against those who dwelt at Jerusalem, and their rulers, mentioned their delivering him (Christ) to Pilate to be slain; and after having asserted his resurrection from the dead, and expatiated upon it from ver. 30, to 37. he proceeds in these words, *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sins: and by him, all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* That is, all that believe in Christ, and obey the gospel, are freed and delivered from both the guilt and power of sin; from which they could not be delivered by the law of Moses: for that, being a dispensation which related chiefly to outward actions, did not make the comers thereunto perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; and for that reason there was a repetition of sacrifices and oblations at certain times: whereas Christ, by the one offering of himself once made, obtained not only remission of sins that are past, but grace to help to overcome sin in the lust of it, and to renew and

sanctify the powers and faculties of our souls, that we might, through strength received from him, walk in newness of life.

And herein consists the perfection of the Christian religion, and for this end the ministry of the gospel was ordained, as the apostle Paul declares of himself, in his defence before Agrippa, *viz.* having first mentioned the Gentiles, he says, Acts xxvi. 17, 18, 19, 20. *To whom I now send thee, to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among the sanctified by faith, which is in me (Christ Jesus): whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but shewed first unto them at Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and bring forth works meet for repentance.* Agreeable to this he tells the Romans, that the gospel itself is the power of God, in these words, Rom. i. 16. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.* In all which is evidently set forth, both the end and design of the Christian religion, and the means of obtaining that end. The end is repentance and forgiveness of sins; and the consequence an inheritance among the sanctified, witnessing the righteousness of God to be revealed. The means is faith in that light which reveals or makes manifest both the evil and the good; and in that power of God, which strengthens and enables us to forsake the one, and to do the other.

In all these forms of expression are implied a want of power in us, and a supply of that want from

from God, to be received by faith, which the apostle illustrates by the faith of Abraham, where he says, Rom. iv. *That he being not weak in faith, considered not his own body now dead, when he was an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; which faith was imputed to him for righteousness.* Nor was it written for his sake only, but for us also; to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe in him that raised Jesus from the dead: that is, as Abraham being an hundred years old, and his wife, in the common course of nature, past child-bearing, yet believed that God was able to supply those defects; so we, notwithstanding the weakness and incapacity we are under, by reason of the depravity of our nature, yet through faith in the power of God, which was eminently exerted in raising up our Lord Jesus, and is offered to us by the Holy Spirit, which is given to all that believe in him, are enabled to walk in newness of life. To this effect he argues in the former part of the epistle to the Romans, in the strongest and clearest terms.

And in the epistle to the Ephesians, he expresses this incapacity or weakness, by the word *death*; having in chap. i. set forth the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward, who believe according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead; he goes on chap. ii. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. By grace you are saved. And verse the 8th, For by grace you are saved through faith, not of yourselves, it is the gift of God: not of works, (wrought by ourselves, by our strength and ability) lest any man should (as*

some do in this day) *boast*. Nor yet are we saved without works wrought by the spirit and power of God through Christ; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; which God hath ordained that we should walk in them. Once more he expresses in the same epistle, chap. v. ver. 8. this incapacity by the word *darkness*, *Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of the light* (for the fruit of the spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth): by giving us light, he supplies the defects of our understanding; by giving power, he strengthens the weakness of our wills and affections, respecting things spiritual, and bringing forth fruits acceptable to God.

In which respect the Christian religion doth eminently excel the best helps that can be obtained from the best moralists among the heathen: in whose writings, it must be confessed, are many good precepts, but little said of applying unto God, depending on him for help; but all is generally left to the conduct of our own understandings, and to the power of our own wills, which they tell us, indeed, are in many respects wrong; but yet, if they are regulated, must regulate themselves, according to the rules of right reason, from which men have deviated. But how a thing that is wrong can regulate itself, or set itself right, is to me unaccountable.

And, in this respect, Christianity in the life, spirit, and power of it, excels Christianity in the literal, historical, formal profession only. That is, the Christian, who believing that there is power afforded to men by God, through Jesus Christ, for the overcoming evil, and doing good, applies himself in this faith to the throne of grace, from time to time, praying for grace to
help

help in time of need, for the forsaking the one, and doing the other, and continues in that good exercise, in a daily watchfulness thereunto, throughout the whole course of his life; such a Christian, I say, has much the advantage of him, who professes indeed to believe what he finds recorded, of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension, &c. of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that he has left most excellent precepts and doctrines recorded in holy scripture, which he will endeavour, as far as the infirmities of human nature will admit of, to put it in practice (though many do not proceed thus far), but as to the doing the commands of Christ, he is so far from pretending to do it, that he esteems it a presumption to assert the possibility of it: whereas it is evident to any who reads the New Testament with impartial seriousness and attention, that the peculiar design of the Christian religion was not only to introduce into the world a set of most excellent precepts, such as mankind till then was never blessed withal; but also, and more especially, to offer power to those who are willing to receive it, for the performance of them.

And indeed, without this power, the Christian religion would not bring so great a blessing and advantage to mankind. For as the precepts of Christ are more pure and refined than any other, as reaching to the reforming the mind, which is a work of a more pure and perfect nature, than a conformity to precepts relating only to outward actions; so if men, in this great and necessary work, are left to themselves, all the advantage they can reap by it is this, that they are thereby brought to the sight of good things; but excluded the possibility of attaining to the experience of them. But the case in truth is far otherwise, as has been already by divers in-

stances made evident, and to say otherwise, is contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel; the precepts whereof are delivered, not as matters of mere speculation, but of practice. And therefore our Lord, after having delivered most excellent precepts relating to forsaking evil in the very conception or root of it, and doing good from the heart, in the many instances mentioned in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Matthew, concludes, *That whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wise man that built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the wind blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.* To the same effect he says elsewhere, *Not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven.* Again, *Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.* John xv. 14.

From hence it is evident, that obedience to the command of Christ is required from all those who profess to be his followers: and it would be very preposterous to suppose, that this should be in so express and particular terms required, and the performance of it left impossible. The ways of God are not unreasonable; but as he commands obedience, so he enables all who believe in him, to do what he commands: and for this end he promised, and in due time gave, his good spirit, to the power of which is attributed the whole work of man's salvation, consisting, first, in repentance from dead works, conversion, sanctification, or being made holy, justification, or being made righteous, as well as esteemed such: which I take to be the true intent of that text viz. *He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification*; that is, that we through power received

received from him, (which the apostle calls elsewhere *the power of his resurrection*) might be made *righteous*.

And this work taken together, is in one word called *regeneration*, or being born again, made a new creature, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, being made partakers of the divine nature, which is the utmost that can be expected from religion; being a complete reparation of that loss which mankind sustained by sin and transgression. All which is not our work, simply so understood, but that of the Holy Spirit of God. And therefore, the true believers are said to be born again, 1 Pet. i. 23. *Not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which lives and abides for ever.* And again, John i. 13. *Who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*

C H A P. IV.

Containing some general Observations on the foregoing.

I Would not be understood, by attributing all this to the Spirit of God, as if man was nowise concerned, or acted no part, in the working out his own salvation; but was to be considered as purely passive, as some have misrepresented this doctrine. He that made us rational creatures, does not destroy the faculty of reason in us, but improves it, by convincing and enlightening our understandings, moving and inclining our wills towards such objects as are acceptable to himself, and out of the contrary, and this in a manner always clear and evident. And the mind, thus enlightened and affected, puts itself

upon action, not as of itself, but under the conduct and influence of him that enlightens and inclines it; having its trust and dependence always on him; being sensible that without him he can do nothing, cannot move one step rightly: as, on the other hand, believing that through strength received from God, through Christ, he can do all things appertaining to life and godliness; and this not irresistibly, but by reasonable ways and persuasions, giving the mind, which was under the power and dominion of sinful habits, a different turn or inclination, which if it does not neglect, but makes use of the help offered, it gains victory over them: but if through neglect or wilfulness, it disregards or resists these gentle yet effectual strivings, it remains under the power and dominion of sin still.

Thus the doctrine of rewards and punishments is established on an equal and reasonable foundation; and without this, it cannot be equitably and reasonably supported: for as it would be unjust to punish men for omissions or commissions, which are not in their power to do or not to do; so it is altogether just and reasonable, where sufficient help is offered, and yet neglected, that they who are in this neglect or disobedience should be punished. As, on the contrary, in our making use of the help offered us, and thereby coming up in the practice of our duties, we should receive the rewards promised to well-doing.

Thus when we find in scripture the good actions of men under this direction, called the *Fruits of the spirit*, we are to understand, not that man acts no part in them, but that the Spirit or Grace of God quickening or moving upon him, he is prevailed upon to act by his help: as on the

the other hand, when we are advised or commanded to work, to bring forth good fruits, to eschew evil, and do good, to come into the practice of those excellent virtues recommended throughout the holy scriptures; it is to be understood, that we are to set about them, not trusting in ourselves, or in our own strength, but in God, through Christ; and for that reason, we are commanded to trust in him, to look unto Jesus, who is the author and finisher of our faith; and not to cast away our confidence, &c. Hence the righteousness brought forth by Christians, is called the righteousness of Christ, the righteousness of God, and the righteousness of faith; because Christ is the principal agent or efficient in it, and we through faith in him, and not otherwise, are made able to act. This distinction, all that enter upon a life of religion and godliness ought to take with them in every step, without which they cannot proceed rightly, as with it they may persevere with a good assurance of success, unto the end.

It may be further observed, that not only the Christian religion, properly so called, but the religion of the antients from the beginning, stood on the same bottom; and the righteousness which was in all ages acceptable to God, was the righteousness of faith: that is, consisted in their believing in God, and obeying his will revealed to them, either immediately to those whom it particularly concerned, or to some of his servants and prophets, who were to communicate the same to the people. And for their help and assistance in doing the will of God thus revealed, he gave them his good spirit in all ages, by which he called to them, strove with them, invited them, warned the ungodly, supported and comforted the righteous, as might easily be confirmed by
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very many instances out of the books of the Old Testament; there being nothing more frequent throughout the holy scriptures of all ages, but more especially in the book of the Psalms, and other prophetic writings, than strong exhortations to trust in God, to believe in him, to look unto him in all dangers, difficulties, and temptations, whether national or particular; and to wait on him diligently for strength, and for renewing of it. So that true religion, in the ground of it, was always the same, and was indeed as old as the creation; being not the religion of nature, but the religion of God, having for its foundation, not human reason, but faith in God's power and all-sufficiency.

And the difference between the religion of the ancients, and the Christian religion, was not in their different ground and foundation; but that the precepts of the gospel being in general more inward and spiritual than those of former dispensations, the faith of the gospel, in the nature and degree of it, was suited to such a dispensation. And for this reason, it pleased God to shew forth his power, in the most extraordinary and wonderful manner, in the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, and the great effusion of the Holy Spirit which followed thereupon; by which, the most sure and certain foundation of faith was laid; not only for help and strength to do the will of God in this life, but a most reasonable ground of hope for our resurrection to eternal life, and a partaking of the rewards promised to well-doing, in that life which is to come. In which respect, the Christian religion is an improvement upon the religion of former ages of the world, that is, as it is a dispensation more inward and spiritual, and thereby life and immortality

immortality brought more clearly to light through the gospel.

As to what some object, that this dependence on God, and trust and confidence in him, as it supposes man to be a weak, helpless, depending being, is a debasing human nature; there would be some reason for this objection, if one frail, fallible man was to be subject to another, equally frail and fallible, or to any other being below their Creator. But that the thing formed should depend on, and be subject to, him that made it, has not the least absurdity in it: but, on the contrary, as every one that knows himself rightly must be sensible of the shortness of his own understanding, as well as the weakness and deficiency of the faculties of his mind in general; and by taking a view of others, cannot but observe the like imperfections in them, from those inconsistencies and contradictions which appear among the greatest pretenders to mere natural reason; he that considers this rightly, will find it difficult, in the nature of things, to fix a standard of certainty in understanding, and stability in practice in any thing, but in God the fountain of truth, and all perfection: and, therefore, this is so far from debasing human nature, that it is the only true means of exalting it, in the most eminent manner. For man having by sin and disobedience debased himself, and cast himself down from that state of purity and uprightness, in which it is both reasonable in itself, as well as agreeable to scripture, to believe that God made him; it is the highest honour to mankind, as well as an act of the greatest love in God, to interpose with his help, in order to restore him to that blessed state in which he was at first created.

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That this is truly the case, is so evident from the general tenor of the gospel, that it has been often matter of admiration to me, that any should be found to disclaim such help, and set up for self-sufficient independent beings, and yet at the same time to pretend to be Christians; when almost every chapter in the New Testament, as well as other parts of the scripture, is a witness against them: and to say all that may be said in defence of this principle, would be to transcribe the greatest part of the sacred writings. And I can account for this degenerate principle, which has of late appeared in some, no otherwise, than by supposing it to be the effect of the same pride and selfishness which prevailed on our first parents to disobey the command of God, *viz.* it being then suggested, that upon their so doing, they should be no longer in a state of dependence as before, but that they should be as gods. What less do these modern writers suggest, when they tell us that we are able of ourselves to do every thing that is necessary for our acceptance with God; that is, that we are self-sufficient or independent, or in other words, as gods (that being one of the incommunicable attributes of the Divine Being), which to mention, is with me enough to confute it?

Upon the whole, the sum and substance of the Christian religion, according to what has already been advanced out of the holy scriptures, is this, *viz.* man, having by transgressing the commands of God rendered himself an object of his displeasure, as well as put himself out of a capacity of restoring himself to the favour of God, through that weakness and depravity which sin hath brought him under, it hath pleased God to appoint a means for his help and recovery, in both these respects, *viz.* Jesus Christ, through whom

whom, for the sake of that one offering once made by him on the cross, God the Father has declared himself reconciled unto sinful man; upon condition of repentance for sins past, and amendment of life; forsaking evil, and doing good; in a word, obeying God's commands, and not without this condition. To which end, he also offers him the light and help of his grace and good Spirit, that he may see and distinguish good and evil, be assisted and strengthened to do the one, and eschew the other, and live for evermore; which is complete salvation, and a religion worthy of God, in itself most reasonable, and deserving our ready acceptance.

I thought it necessary thus to collect from the holy scriptures, what the Christian religion is in its pure primitive state; because some of those who have writ of late on that subject, have not thought fit to define what they mean by Christianity, in such clear explicit terms as might be expected. Some seem to intend thereby only a belief of the history of our Lord Jesus Christ, on the same evidence on which we believe all other histories: whereas by what has been said, it appears that the Christian religion includes this belief (that is, where the gospel has been preached and professed) but extends also farther, *viz.* to the sanctifying and purifying the hearts of those that rightly receive it, by the spirit of Christ; without which last, the first avails nothing to our acceptance with God. Others again make the Christian religion to consist in mere morality, and would have it to be only an improvement of natural religion (as they call it); and that thereby nothing new is introduced into the world, which we had not before, but this, that men are, in more plain and express terms, thereby informed

ed what all men had before as rational beings, which is sufficient to shew them their duty to God and one another, and bring them into the practice of it, without any farther help than what they have in themselves, of themselves. Some of these have gone so far, as to make it even an indifferent thing, whether men believe what is recorded in the holy scriptures of our Lord Jesus Christ, or not. This is an extreme on the other hand, and both alike pernicious. Whereas the true medium is, that those to whom the gospel is preached ought to believe, and receive, both the outward and inward appearance of the Son of God; by the one of which they are put in a capacity of salvation; by the other, they are actually and really saved through the power and virtue of his spirit.

C H A P. V.

Upon what Evidence principally the primitive Christians believed the Truth of the Christian Religion.

IT remains now to inquire, upon what evidence principally the primitive Christians believed the truth of the Christian religion. *Answ.* Upon this evidence, viz. the powerful influence which it had on the minds of those to whom the gospel was preached; and who, with an honest sincere heart, attended to it, not only to the convincing their understandings of the truth of the doctrine, but prevailing on their wills to a conformity thereunto, by the lively operation of the Spirit of Christ, which was given for that end. That this was the case appears from many instances, some of which follow, as first, Mat.

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vii. 28, 29. *When Jesus had ended these sayings,* (meaning his sermon on the mount, a set of the best doctrines and precepts the world was ever blessed with) *the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* And Mark. i. 21, 22. *And they went into Capernaum, and straightway, on the sabbath, he went into the synagogue and taught, and they were astonished at his doctrine; for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the Scribes.* Again, Luke iv. 32. *And they were astonished at his doctrine, for his word was with power.* These forms of expression imply a peculiar virtue and efficacy in the words of Christ, beyond the words of common teachers; these reaching the outward ears, and, at best, but moving the understanding to an assent, where the matter is true and convincing; but those, besides convincing the understanding, affecting the will and all the faculties of the soul to obedience, by a lively and powerful influence, which is peculiar to them. To the like effect we read John vi. when some of his disciples had taken offence, and went back, and walked no more with him, *Then Jesus said unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered, and said, To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we believe, and are sure, that thou art Christ the Son of the living God.* The like confession the same apostle made, Mat. xvi. 16. upon which our Lord told him, *Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* Here was again a complete assurance of his being the Son of the living God, from the lively effects of his words, which were not only in themselves living and powerful, but communicated of that virtue and power to them, which put the matter out of all question, as to his

his divine mission: and therefore, they might well say as they did, Whither shall we go? what is there wanting to a complete evidence, that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God?

To the like effect our Lord farther asserts the evidence of his doctrine, speaking of himself as a shepherd, and his followers as sheep, John x. 4, 5. *When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice, and a stranger they will not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of a stranger.* Here is a plain distinction between voice and voice, respecting the evidence or certainty of them; the one being self-evident, the other uncertain; the one well known, the other unknown: and this self-evidence, this knowledge applied to the voice of Christ; the uncertainty or defect of knowledge to the voice of a stranger; that is, every other voice, whether it be that of our own deceitful hearts, or that of others not under the conduct or direction of the voice of Christ. From all which it is farther evident, that the voice of Christ, (whether we understand it of his outward preaching the gospel of the kingdom, as in that day, or his inward discoveries to the understanding of believers, by his light and good spirit) has an evidence peculiar to itself, exceeding all other evidences to a mind rightly disposed to receive it.

If it be inquired, What does this voice discover to them? It may be answered, Truths agreeable to the will of God, and their duty accordingly, and that in a way suitable to the present state the mind is under. And those that attend unto these, in the first and smallest manifestation, and become obedient thereto, they are made witnesses of farther and greater discoveries, and an enlargement of understanding respecting the doctrine

doctrine of Christ, according to our Lord's saying, John vii. 16, 17. *My doctrine is not mine, but his :bat sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.* And for this end, viz. the enlarging our understandings, relating to the doctrines and precepts of Christ, in the most certain and evident manner, the Holy Spirit was promised by him, and in due time given, whose office was to teach them all things, to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them, to testify of him (Christ) to reprove the world of sin, &c. to guide them (the disciples and followers of Christ) into all truth, to receive of his, and shew unto them, &c. By all which it is evident, that as Christ died to put mankind in a capacity of salvation, so all the benefits of the gospel are conveyed to us by the Holy Spirit, which is given to believers; by which they are put in remembrance of the sayings, that is, the doctrines and precepts of Christ. And it is this, as it comes from him, so it bears testimony to him, and is a sufficient teacher; for it guides them into all truth necessary for them to believe and practise; and lastly, it receives of his, and shews unto them, that is, it applies unto them, all the benefits accruing by the gospel, as they come under qualifications fit to receive them: to the penitent it gives remission of sins, that is, a sense of it, in those times of refreshment which come from his presence, and as they continue in faithfulness and perseverance, attending to it, sanctifies them more and more, and justifies them, and gives them peace: and all this in a convincing self-evident manner, as is clearly implied in these forms of expression, *to teach them all things, to testify of Christ, to guide them into all truth,* which it could not properly

be said to do, unless it did it with certainty; neither could it otherwise answer the end for which it was given.

And that it was so in fact, will farther appear, by shewing, that as the Holy Spirit was promised, so it was in due time given, to be a lasting permanent teacher, as well as help to believers. For this promise of the Holy Ghost had reference, not only to that great and notable effusion or pouring out of the spirit at the time of Pentecost, which was a solemn confirmation of the new and spiritual dispensation of the gospel; but also to that instruction, which those that attended to it, were to receive from it continually, according to the promise of Christ, John xiv. *I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, viz. the spirit of truth.* So that the spirit of truth was to supply the want of his personal presence, and to become a teacher or instructor, as well as a comforter, to his disciples and followers, after his departure from them. In which consisted the peculiar specifick difference, (if I may so call it) between the gospel dispensation and all others; under this, men having an inward instructor always abiding with them; whereas, under the former outward dispensations, as the law was given to Moses, and by him committed to writing, and delivered to the people, so in after-ages, they were to receive the interpretation of it from the priest's lips, which were therefore said to preserve knowledge.

Now, that this promise of the Holy Ghost was fulfilled, appears by the account we have of it in the Acts of the Apostles; which, though a brief history of what followed after the resurrection and ascension of Christ, yet in this necessary point is very full, as chap. ii. where we have a particular relation of the great effusion of the Holy Spirit

on the day of Pentecost, which, it is certain, was particularly miraculous and extraordinary; the divine Wisdom so ordering it, for raising the attention, and begetting faith, in that which afterwards followed, *viz.* the preaching and propagation of the gospel to the world: concerning which, I shall not speak now particularly; but only observe, that though this, in the manner of it, was extraordinary, yet the thing, *viz.* the gift of the Holy Spirit to believers in general, was designed to be, and actually was given to them, as a common permanent privilege, not only in the gathering the church of Christ, but to remain with the churches when gathered; and that not only to the first publishers of the gospel, for their assistance in that work, and afterwards to the ministers of the churches, when gathered into societies, but also to those that heard them, and to all members of the churches, by which they were assisted, and their understandings opened, to receive the gospel when preached, and to be with them for a teacher and instructor, as well as helper, in their whole conduct, when outward teachers were absent from them.

A few instances of this tendency may suffice; as first, when Peter took occasion, from the great concourse of people that were gathered at the day of Pentecost, to preach the gospel to them, it is said, *When they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off; which was a very extensive declaration of the promise of the Holy Ghost, both as to time, being not only to*
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them, but to their posterity; and place, being not confined to them there present, but to all that were afar off, as well believers in common, as ministers and preachers. And chap. v. vers. 32. after Peter had preached Christ to them in these words, *The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree; him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins, and we are his witnesses of these things, and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.* Again, chap. x. ver. 44. *They (the Gentiles) were filled with the Holy Ghost.* By these passages it appears, that in the preaching the gospel by the apostles, the Holy Ghost was given to the disciples, the hearers, to those who obeyed God without distinction, as well as to the apostles or preachers of the word; and that it was a witness to them of the truth of Christ's divine mission, and the good effects of it, according to the promise of Christ before cited, *viz. He shall testify of me.*

That this was also given to Christians in common, for the same end, when gathered into churches, may appear by many instances from the epistles directed to the several churches, by those who were instrumental in that work: a few instances may suffice, as Rom. viii. vers. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16. *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life, because of righteousness; but if the spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh, for if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye, through*
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the spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear: but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father; the spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. In this passage may be observed, first, the necessity of having the spirit of Christ; so that those who have it not, do not belong to him, are none of his. Secondly, the work of it, that it mortifies the deeds of the body, and quickens the soul to a life of holiness; insomuch that those that are led by it, become the sons of God, begotten into his image or likeness. And lastly, that it bears witness with their spirits, that they are his children; that is, gives them a certain sense or understanding of it, by an evidence peculiar to itself.

Again, 1 Cor. chap. ii. and iii. are full of testimonies to the evidence and certainty of this principle: what is most directly to that purpose, we have in chap. ii. ver. 11. and 12. *What man knoweth the things of man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us of God.* We have here a plain distinction between the spirit of man, and the spirit of God, and the distinct office of the one and the other, as they are employed about things of a very different nature, viz. the things of a man, or natural things, and spiritual things, or the things of God, or which are freely given to us of him; by which must be meant the benefits we receive by the coming of Christ, the free grace or favour of God through him,

which are only known to belong to us, by the sense or evidence which his spirit gives us of it, in our faithful walking with him; for which end he tells them, chap. iii. ver. 16. *That they are the temples of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in them.* It does not once visit them, and then leave them, but abides with them for a constancy; and therefore the same apostle charges it on the Galatians as folly and degeneracy, that they, having once received this principle through the faith of the gospel, were declining from it, and returning to Jewish ceremonies. *This only would I learn of you, chap. iii. ver. 2. and 3. received ye the spirit by the works of the law, or by hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish, having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?* Having received a principle, in which there is an evidence and certainty by which you may know, as well as virtue and power by which you may do, the good and acceptable will of God; are you for leaving this living powerful principle, and turning again to the weak and beggarly elements? *viz. circumcision, and the observation of days, &c.* from which things it is evident, that the principal design of this epistle, was to withdraw them, and to establish them on this divine principle, as a most sure foundation. And therefore having, chap. v. vers. 22, 23. enumerated the most excellent virtues, in which a Christian life consists, *viz. love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,* which he calls fruits of the spirit; he adds, *If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit.* And with respect to outward ceremonies, such as circumcision, he tells them chap. v. ver. 6. *Neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.* And chap. vi. ver. 15. *In Christ Jesus, neither circum-*
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*cision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; which is the work and effect of the Divine Spirit. But I would confine myself at present to such passages as speak of the Holy Spirit as an evidence and ground of certainty to believers, respecting the truth of Christianity; of which, having produced some instances out of the writings of this great apostle of the Gentiles, from which many more might be cited from every one of his epistles, and almost every chapter, to avoid unnecessary repetitions I shall proceed to cite some passages out of the first epistle of John, which are most direct and apposite to the present purpose, as containing a clear testimony to this principle of certainty. First, under the term of anointing, chap. ii. ver. 20. *Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things,* and ver. 26, 27. *These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you: but the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in it;* (for so it may be justly rendered). The occasion of this expression, was to establish them against seducers and apostates; for he mentions, ver. 19. *Some that went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us:* and then proceeds, *but you have an unction, &c.* The obvious construction of all which, is, that though the good apostle wrote to them by way of advice and caution, relating to the danger they were under of being deceived, and drawn from the faith by apostates and seducers; yet his principal*

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business, was to put them in remembrance of an instructor, which they had always with them, to which, if they duly attended, they would not absolutely need his instruction, or that of any other man; for by this they knew all things, and were taught all things necessary for them: and therefore he advises them principally to regard this, to abide under its teaching, and then they would be in no danger from seducers; but having received from God (the Holy One), a ground of certainty; which was always with them, attending constantly to it; as by this they were first begotten into the faith of the gospel, so by the same they would be preserved and established in it against all opposition.

The same apostle in the following passages is yet more clear and express, if possible, to our present purpose, chap. iii. ver. 24. *Hereby we know that he abideth in us by his spirit, which he hath given us.* Chap. iv. ver. 13. *Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit.* Chap. v. ver. 9, 10, 11, 12. *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son: He that believeth in the Son of God, hath a witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record that God hath given unto us, eternal life; and this life is in his Son: he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life.* And ver. 20. *We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ.*

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By comparing these texts, it will clearly appear, first, that the Spirit of God, which was given to believers, was not only in itself certain, but was that by which they had an evidence or assurance of their being in his favour; and that not transiently, but that he abode in them, and they dwelt in him for a continuance, which enabled them to live according to the will of God, and gave them peace and consolation in their so living: and as this was given to them of God, so he calls it the witness or testimony of God, and declares it to be greater than that of man, or any human testimony: as if he had said, if we receive the testimony of men, whether it be that of our own senses, or the report of others, whom we have just reason to believe for their veracity, we do well so far; but the testimony of the Holy Spirit of God, consisting in the lively operation of it upon our spirits, to the quickening and raising of them to a life of holiness and true righteousness, who were dead in sins and trespasses, this is greater than any human testimony whatsoever; and this testimony is not at a distance from us, but he that believeth has it in himself: he that hath the Son of God, hath this life, this virtue, this power, by which he acts vigorously in the things of God; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not this life. And lest they should think this only as an amusement, or something unintelligible, designed blindly to move the affections only, and not to inform the understanding; he adds, ver. 20. that it was from an understanding he had given them, (which therefore of themselves they had not) that they knew the Son of God was come; and that from that truth and sincerity which he had begotten in them, they knew him that was the fountain

fountain of truth, or truth itself, and that they were in him, being made like unto him; which was a wise and just way of reasoning.

Agreeably hereunto, the apostle Paul calls the Holy Spirit of God, *The spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him, the eyes of their understanding being enlightened*, Eph. i. 17, 18. and 2 Cor. chap. iv. ver 6, 7. *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ.* So that from hence it abundantly appears, that in those early times of Christianity, the Spirit of God, which was given to believers through Jesus Christ, did influence all the powers and faculties of the soul, the understanding, as well as will and affections; and in their certain experience of this, consisted the principal evidence of the truth of the whole: I say principal evidence, because in this experience, the great end of the coming of Christ, which was to destroy the works of the devil, to purify and sanctify the hearts of men, was fully and completely answered: and therefore, those that were witnesses of it, believed the gospel for its own sake, because they knew it to be what it was declared to be, *The power of God to salvation*; and all other evidences *ab extra*, were designed as means to bring men to this great end, and for the sake of it; and this being found true, the truth of the whole was established beyond contradiction; whereas, if this had failed, if those who had received the gospel, had found themselves never the better for it, there was great reason to suppose, that all had been suspected for imposture, notwithstanding those external evidences attending it. But now the primitive believers might say as the Samaritans did,
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John iv. 42. having put the matter upon an experiment, and found it completely to answer its main design, which was the reformation of mankind: now we believe, not because of the report of others, or for the sake of any external evidence or credentials only, (though we do not slight or disesteem them) but we have heard him ourselves, we have had experience ourselves of the good effects of his coming; therefore, *we know this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.*

C H A P. VI.

What the Christian Religion is, or ought to be now; and upon what Evidence, principally, true Christians of this Generation receive and believe it.

IT remains now to inquire, upon what evidence, principally, true Christians of this generation receive and believe the Christian Religion. Before I directly answer this inquiry, I would observe that the Christian Religion is or was designed to be the same in succeeding generations, that it was in the primitive times; that is, as the gospel was then an inward and powerful thing, whereby the hearts of men were sanctified and purified from their defilements, so it is the same at this day, and was so at all times since its first publication. And the true reason why this does not appear so generally among the professors of it, is not any defect in the thing, but men's unbelief and error in judgment; they not believing it to be so, and consequently not applying for help where alone it is to be had. And this I take to be the first ground and foundation of that degeneracy which has so generally appeared, and

and still remains among Christians; men erroneously supposing, that the effusion of the spirit, and the gifts and graces accompanying it, was a thing peculiar to the infancy of Christianity; and as it did, in a great measure, cease very early after the apostles days, so it was designed, that it should in after-ages cease entirely, and men be left to the instructions left them by the inspired writers, in the holy scriptures, out of which every man is to collect his duty relating to faith and practice, in the best manner he can. I call this an error in judgment, because it is contrary to the scriptures themselves; which those, who are in this belief, would have to be their rule in all things: then surely in this, as well as other things, there being nothing more fully declared in those sacred writings, than the necessity, power, and sufficiency of this principle; insomuch that it appears, that the very essence of the Christian religion, as to the real peculiar benefit and excellency of it, consists in this, which is inseparable from it in the nature of the thing. And therefore, however men may have supposed it to be altered, and would represent it to differ from what it was originally, unless we lay aside a great part of the holy scriptures, it is the same now it was then,

This sameness of the Christian religion, is not only agreeable to scripture, but to the nature of the thing; for the thing in its nature, end, and design, is unchangeable. Former dispensations, because of their weakness and unprofitableness, were changeable, and were designed to be changed; it being the will of God, not to dispense to sinful men all his blessings at once, but by weaker dispensations, to make them see their own frailties and infirmities, in order to make way for one that was more powerful, the law of the

the new covenant being inward and powerful, and the priesthood perfect in every respect, and unchangeable; for what alteration can there be expected in a thing which is already complete. And such was the Christian religion in its first institution, as tending to destroy sin in the very root or conception of it, by the inward operation of the Holy Spirit against its first motions, as well as perfectly to atone for sins past, by the offering of Christ once made on the cross.

I would also have it observed, that by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which I affirm to be designed to remain in the Christian church in all ages; I do not mean the gift of miracles, such as were in the primitive times, which were thought necessary (the Divine Wisdom so ordering it) for the introducing the Christian religion into the world: but by the gifts of the Holy Spirit to remain in the church, I mean the helps afforded us thereby, for the great ends of sanctification, and renewing the mind into a state of holiness. This distinction is evidently to be observed, 1 Cor. xii. 7. where the apostle takes notice in the verses foregoing, that there were diversities of gifts, and differences of administrations, and diversities of operations, which were peculiar, some to one, and some to another, he adds, ver. 7. *Though there are these diversities, &c. yet there is one thing in which they all agree, viz. that the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal*; that is, to improve in virtue, in holiness, in religion, and in godly living; which, as it is equally necessary in all ages, so it is afforded to men in all ages; and that in a way plain, intelligible, and self-evident; otherwise it is improperly called a manifestation, which admits of no doubtfulness or obscurity; as, on the other hand,
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if the discoveries of the spirit were doubtful and obscure, mankind were still left at uncertainties about their duty as Christians, contrary to the very tenor of the new covenant; wherein it is said, Heb. viii. 10, 11. *I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest.* Now, was this spoken to that generation only, or does it relate to us also? Certainly to us as well as to them, inasmuch as in this knowledge of the Lord thus attained, consists the very character of the new or gospel covenant, as distinguished from the old or legal one: and therefore, to suppose the gospel to be one thing at one time, and another thing at another time, is an absurdity not to be admitted. As knowledge implies certainty, so the laws of God written in the mind, and the knowledge of him arising from thence, are certain and evident to those that rightly attend to them at all times.

From which it may be justly concluded, that as the Christian religion is in all ages the same, so the principal evidence of it is the same in all ages, consisting in the knowledge and experience of the virtue and power of the faith of the gospel, to the purifying and sanctifying the heart, and bringing forth the good fruits of the spirit, according as the same are inwardly discovered to us, by the light and manifestation thereof. And in this experience, the truth and right understanding of the general doctrines of religion contained in the holy scriptures, is best secured and established for all the good ends and purposes of
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of them; and all the precepts of Christianity are only effectually complied with this way, *viz.* by the faith of the operation of the Spirit of God; so that we may truly say in this case, as the apostle did, relating to the law in that day, *viz.* *Do we make void the scriptures through faith?* Nay, we establish the scriptures; and it is for want of men's applying themselves to the acquiring this experience through faith, that the general doctrines of religion are perverted, and the scriptures themselves wrested, in order to reconcile the Christian religion (the most pure institution that ever was in the world, or can be) to a state of sin and iniquity, to our beloved lusts and passions: men erroneously supposing, that as long as they are in the profession of the Christian faith, that is, as they account it, in the belief of certain facts and propositions, which they have collected out of the scriptures, they are entitled to the benefits of the coming of Christ, notwithstanding their continuing in a sinful state, more or less, which they are very ready to indulge themselves in, when thus persuaded; than which, nothing is more contrary to the whole tenor of the gospel as delivered in the scriptures, and consequently to the scriptures themselves.

But it may be asked, How may we become witnesses of this work? *Answ.* Not by learned dissertations about it, for the generality of mankind are not qualified for these; not by long arguments, or deductions of nice reasonings, for the far greater part of mankind are not capable of those, though they may have a sufficient share of understanding, to act that part in the creation which providence has allotted them; nor even by the exercise of that portion of reason and understanding which we have as men, unassisted by

by the illumination of the Holy Spirit of God : for the mind, with all its faculties, the reason, or understanding, as well as will and affections, being the thing which is out of order and wants regulation, it is preposterous to suppose that it should regulate itself, without help received somewhere ; and it is as absurd to imagine, that one man, equally fallible, should regulate the errors of another, notwithstanding any supposed superiority of judgment from learning or other acquirements. The learned part of mankind being notoriously as much at variance, as the illiterate or ignorant, and rather more so about the things of God, and even natural things ; there being a great disagreement among them about the very first principle of knowledge in these things, in which they have brought forth nothing which may be depended upon for certain, saving in those parts which are capable of demonstration, such as mathematical learning, and that which depends on experiments. And this last is the principal ground of certainty in religion ; for as in natural knowledge, which depends on experiments, the certainty does not terminate in the judgment or assent of the mind barely, though from the reasonableness of the thing, the mind may have a good degree of certainty concerning it ; but yet there remains some degree of suspense or doubtfulness, till an experiment is rightly made and found to succeed ; this removes every appearance of uncertainty : so in religion, from the credibility of the history, which we have as much reason to believe, as any of the best attested accounts of things at that distance of time, and from other undoubted marks of sincerity and veracity, which appear every where in the writings of the New Testament ; from these con-
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siderations, there is just reason to believe the truth of what is recorded. But, as the main end of the Christian faith is to make men better, to renew and sanctify the mind, which has been depraved; when men apply themselves to this work, not trusting in themselves, but in the grace of God (which is sufficient for that end), for his help and assistance, and in their so doing, find themselves helped and assisted by him; these are satisfied beyond all doubt or hesitation, concerning the truth of the Christian religion, being in the actual possession of the good effects of it, by which they not only believe the doctrines of Christianity, but know them fulfilled in their own experience, as to their main end and design.

To return therefore to the inquiry, how may men attain this experience? *Ans.* By attending to that which discovers to them the state of their minds, in the several circumstances (if I may so call it) of a Christian life, by obeying its discoveries; that is, in the first place, as it finds men in a sinful polluted state, so it sets their sins in order before them, which is the first right step in order to the overcoming of them; and when through faith in his power and sufficiency, and obedience thereunto, they have gained some degree of victory, then by attending from time to time, for farther discoveries of those evils which yet remain, and waiting for farther degrees of strength from him, for the destroying of them, and entering into, and persevering in, a virtuous religious course of life, as the same is gradually opened to them by that light which makes all things manifest, not only what relates to mens words and actions, but also, and more especially what their thoughts, and the secret

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springs and designs of all their words and actions are; for as the state and condition spiritually of every particular man, hath something in it peculiar to itself, by which it differs from the state of all others; so it is the Spirit of God alone, which at times and seasons, discovers to every mind truly and impartially what its state is, in such evident manner, that it cannot be deceived, if duly regarded.

It is true, the holy scriptures contain general rules relating to our duty, both what we ought to do, and what to leave undone: but it is this faithful monitor in our own breast, that tells every man in particular, Thou art the man, this is thy state, this thing thou oughtest to have omitted, and the other to have done, the thoughts of thy heart in this or the other action were or were not right. And this it does frequently, by bringing to our remembrance some text of scripture (where the scripture is read and professed), and opening and applying it powerfully to the present state of every man, in such a manner, that he sees himself clearly, the spirit of God bearing witness with his spirit to the truth of his state, as it really is in the sight of God, and either justifying or condemning him, according as he is found obeying or disobeying this inward law, which will bear witness for or against him, in the great day of account, when God shall judge the secret thoughts, as well as words and actions, of all men, by Jesus Christ. Now this is a plain, intelligible, rational thing, equally so to the unlearned and learned, to the foolish and wise, for every discovery of it is certain to the one, as well as to the other; God having given to every man according to their several abilities, and requiring obedience accordingly, so that all
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are left without excuse. And this plain intelligible way of attaining the knowledge of God, and the necessary truths of religion, however it may be esteemed by the wise and prudent of this world, is what recommends it to those who rightly consider the true end and design of its institution, as an instance of the great wisdom and goodness of God; it being most unreasonable, seeing all are equally concerned in the great affair of salvation, that the way which leads to it should be so intricate and difficult, that none but the learned and polite part of mankind could understand; and the unlearned and common sort must seek to them for instructions about it: whereas in fact, this is so far from being the case, that to impartial observers of things it appears, that these are they who have most of all perplexed the cause of religion, by departing themselves, and leading others from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Jesus, into vain janglings, and mere strife of words; applying their learned notions and distinctions, (which, when true and rightly applied, may be of use) to objects, to which they are not, nor cannot be, adequate or adapted: and in this manner exposing one another, and leading others with them to expose one another, to the destruction of Christian charity, which is the bond of perfection of all goodness.

And this has been evidently one cause, among others, and no small one, of those freedoms which have been used of late, relating to the truth of religion in general: the enemies of it, taking occasion from these imprudent contentions (to say no worse of them) to represent the thing itself as uncertain, thereby introducing scepticism in religion, as well as deism and infidelity: Where-

as, those who know the truth of the Christian doctrine this plain way, as they are satisfied themselves, knowing him in whom they have believed, so they dare make an appeal to every man's conscience, for a testimony concerning it: and though they do not presently commence complete casuists in divinity, nor do they desire it, knowing that many of the controversies on foot are of little signification to the main end of religion; yet being in the actual experience of the good ends of the coming of Christ, they not only believe the great truths of Christianity relating thereto, and what he did and suffered for them, but have a reverent regard for them, knowing that thereby a foundation was laid for all that good which they are in the possession of.

Upon the whole, as the great end of the Christian religion, so far as concerns the part mankind are to act in it, is to renew and sanctify the mind, and consequently to reform the whole conversation, through the power and efficacy of the good spirit of God, which is given for that end; so the principal evidence of the truth of it, is the experience of the effectual working of this power, by which those who are so happy as to become witnesses of it, not only are satisfied for ever themselves, as to the truth of the whole, but are also lights in the world, by which others seeing their good works, wrought by the power of godliness, are (or may be, if they apply themselves rightly to it) induced to make a proof of the same thing, in order that they may glorify God their Father, who is in heaven.

C H A P. VII.

Containing Answers to some Objections, with some general Observations on the whole.

I Am sensible it has been made an objection against the truth and efficacy of the Christian religion, that there are such diversities of judgments about it, some of which must be erroneous, and so great degeneracy of practice, as appears among the professors of it at this time. But this objection has not any just ground; for it does not follow, because there are many errors among men, about this most necessary affair, that therefore there is no truth or certainty in it; but this is rather a confirmation of the shortness of human understanding, when left to itself, and applied to spiritual and divine subjects; and therefore, that men have a real need of help and instruction from God. And as to that looseness of practice, which appears at this time among the professors of religion, and is made an objection by the enemies of it, to the verity and sufficiency of religion itself; it is a very wrong way of arguing, that because many of those who have taken upon them the profession of religion, by neglecting the help which God has ordained for them, which would preserve them from falling into evil, are overcome by it, that therefore there is no such help offered to men; unless it could at the same time be proved (as certainly it cannot) that no such power is given, and that never any, by their utmost application to it, have been enabled to do the will of God: the contrary of which is most apparent, both from the accounts

of holy scripture, wherein we find that many were turned from evil to good, from unrighteousness to righteousness, from a state of nature, in which they brought forth the fruits of the flesh, to a state of grace, in which they brought forth the fruits of the spirit. And not only so, but from the history of all ages of Christianity, though a degeneracy in practice prevailed over too many, yet there were some in whom the power of religion appeared, who thereby became lights of the world in all ages, and even at this time, some such among all professions; though it must be confessed, that wickedness in a remarkable manner prevails at present. But to make this an objection against the virtue and power of religion, sounds very oddly in the mouths of the present objectors, because it is most apparently owing to those loose principles, which they themselves have of late introduced and propagated in the world; and is so far from being any real objection, that it is a confirmation of the weakness and depravity of human nature when left to itself, and consequently that mankind has an absolute need of help in this respect also from God, which it is the great design of the gospel to supply them with. The true reason of the prevalency of wickedness among mankind, at this and all other times, is not, that there is no help afforded them, but their neglecting and even denying of it; which is at this time too much the case, not only of the opposers of religion, but the professors of it, which the apostle Paul foretold, 2 Tim. iii. ver. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. in these words: *This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers*

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of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: which last, viz. denying the power of godliness, is the cause of all the rest, and is at this time the true fountain or source, from whence that torrent of wickedness which runs down the streets, takes its rise; so that it may be truly said, that perilous times are come, and men, too many of them, such as here described.

If it be inquired, how may we distinguish that understanding received from God, and the help which he gives us, to believe and act accordingly, from the understanding which arises from the exercise of our reason, and that power which results from our own will barely? I answer, (besides what has been already said of an evidence which is peculiar to it, which cannot be so fully described to others, as it is felt and experienced by him that hath it), that those who have this experience, know certainly, that as at times in their silent retirements, and humble waitings on God, they receive an understanding of his will relating to their present duty, in such a clear light, as leaves no doubt or hesitation; so at other times, when this is withdrawn from them, they are at a loss again, and see themselves as they really are, ignorant and destitute; and the case is the same in respect to power, they are sensible at times of a certain vigour and liveliness attending them, by which they are not only preserved from evil of all kinds, but their hearts, all the powers and faculties of their souls, are enlarged to run the ways of God's commands with cheerfulness: whereas, at other times, when this seems to be withdrawn from them a little, they are reduced to a deep sense of their own weakness and insufficiency, in which they are humbled, and

led to apply again for help to the throne of grace, which in due time is renewed to them, to their great and unspeakable comfort; and as this understanding, and this strength, is sometimes in a sensible manner present with them, and sometimes seems to be hid from them; so from hence they know it to be a thing not of themselves, or in their own power, but the gift of God; and therefore they find it their great duty and interest, in all times of difficulties, or temptations, from whatever cause they may proceed, to trust in the Lord, and to depend upon him for help, in which they never are disappointed; but finding always success in this holy dependance on a divine aid, their hearts become more and more fixed and established, trusting in him in all their afflictions and besetments, and praising him for those lively helps and encouragements already received.

Now in all this, there is an obvious distinction between what arises from our own understanding merely so, and an understanding received from God; and yet our own understandings as men, are not unconcerned in it, but are in an agreeable manner exercised and employed; for those necessary truths relating to faith and practice, being thus presented to them, and the mind being convinced thereof, either by one clear view, or by undeniable deductions of certain reasonings agreeable to the capacity of the person whom they concern, joins with these convictions; and the judgment thus informed, moves the will to practice, not in an irresistible manner, so as to destroy its liberty, but by rational motives and persuasions, which, if duly attended unto, determines the choice in favour of a religious virtuous course of life: but if through the prevalence of any beloved lusts or passions, the mind is prevailed

vailed on not to listen to these secret calls and invitations, but to adhere to its old vicious habits; in this case, the destruction of all such is of themselves, by their neglecting that help which God has offered them. And therefore, though our salvation is principally and originally the work of God, yet our own consent is required, in order to our partaking of it, and our utmost diligence and application of mind, with humble prayer and supplication to God, and constant watchfulness and attention to that light that discovers both the evil and the good, and a steady dependence on the power of his grace, that we may thereby be enabled to eschew the one, and do the other; which though it may seem somewhat difficult at first, by reason of that cross to our present inclinations, which attends it until the power of vicious habits, to which men have been long accustomed, be weakened and broken; yet by degrees it will not only become more easy, but exceeding pleasant and delightful, according to the saying of our Lord, *Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* And the words of the wise man, Prov. iii. 17. *All her ways (the ways of virtue and wisdom) are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace.* For what greater pleasure can there be conceived, than that which a virtuous pious soul enjoys, when in its faithful walking in obedience to God, it finds his peace to flow, and the light of his countenance to shine upon it; by which those that are enjoyers of it, are sensible of more real comfort at heart, than when their corn and wine, or any other external things, increase; and much more so, than in the pretended counterfeit pleasures of a vicious course of life which however pleasant it may seem for a season, at the last biteth like a serpent,

pent, and stingeth like an adder; the pleasure arising from hence, being but imaginary, brutal, unbecoming a rational being, as well as very short and uncertain in its duration, and in the main, attended with a certain tormentor, anxiety of mind, which is out of the power of any of the most deceitful glosses and false reasonings to quiet, or put an end to; even in this life, as hath appeared by many dismal examples; but the sense of it hath gnawed as a worm, and burnt as a fire in the breasts of evil doers, which they have not been able to quench or conceal; and what is yet worst of all, we are told by our Lord, *That this worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.* Whereas the virtuous religious man, not only enjoys peace and tranquillity in his passage through this world, but has a comfortable prospect and assurance of an happy exit at last; so that in the words of the apostle, *Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.*

Therefore, to make a serious and friendly appeal to the consciences of all concerned: as your own reason and understanding as men, (in concurrence with the testimony of the holy scripture) must inform you, if you look into yourselves, that you are accountable creatures, I would request you in all your conduct to act as such that must render an account for your actions. For this I think is demonstrably true, that it is impossible for you to satisfy yourselves, or to convince others, that there will be no future judgment, or rewards, or punishments in another life; on the contrary, there is the greatest reason to believe there will be such from that foretaste we have of it in our own breasts, which we have good reason to believe will accompany us beyond the grave:

grave: at least, this is most certain, you cannot be assured of the contrary; and therefore, what wise man would risk the loss of an endless good, and the procuring an endless evil, for the sake of enjoying a present short imaginary pleasure, and losing the present satisfaction of a real substantial good: for such is a religious, virtuous course of life, however it may be dressed in frightful colours, by such as are strangers and enemies to it. These are reasonable motives to a virtuous, religious life, which those would do well to consider, who pretend to a greater degree of reason than others, and, in that conceit, represent the religious part of mankind as foolish; whereas in truth none act so reasonably, and the folly is justly chargeable on themselves. And farther, to consider this whole matter upon a rational bottom, I believe it would be difficult for the present objectors to the truth of our holy religion, who pretend to a degree of understanding superior to others, though they have raised so many objections to the Christian doctrine, to contrive a system of religion which would better answer all the ends of it, which are, *The glory of God, the salvation of the soul, and the general good of mankind*; considered either in a private or social capacity, than the Christian system already recommended: by which a solid provision is made for reconciliation to God, notwithstanding our past offences; and power given for overcoming evil, and preserving from it, and renewing, and sanctifying the heart and mind, for the doing good, and persevering in it, in which all our happiness, both private and publick, is comprehended.

Perhaps it may be said, (as it hath been by some) that all this may be secured without any help received elsewhere, by the right use of those faculties

faculties we have as men. There are those who have tried both these ways, and found this last very defective, and this defect arising from the weakness of their natural faculties, and the powerful prevalence of vicious habits. Though it must be confessed, that by a close application to their reason and understanding as men, some have not only been preserved from gross evils, which might render them observed or noted by men, but have raised a fair superstructure of moral righteousness; but that inward regulation of our appetites, and good government of our passions, the power of forgiving injuries, and even rendering of good for evil, that purity of heart, that sincerity or truth in the inward parts, that excellent spirit of charity, or pure love to God and men, in which our duty to both is fully comprehended: these in the extent which the Christian religion recommends them, who can say, when he considers the weak depraved state of mind he is under, and the power of vicious habits which he finds in himself, that it is in his power to bring forth without help received from God? Who can bring a clean thing, (such is a conversation according to the rules of Christianity) out of an unclean heart, but it must partake of the defilement? So that from hence it appears absolutely necessary, in order to the bringing forth these fruits, that the heart, the fountain from whence all good and evil proceed, which in itself is deceitful and desperately wicked, should be changed into another thing: otherwise, if the fountain remains unclean, the streams which flow from it, the conversation of such must be so also. And how is it possible that this change should be effected, but by him, whose attribute alone it is to search the heart, and try the reins, and shew unto men what their thoughts

thoughts are, in order to the regulation and good government of them? The Psalmist was so sensible of the necessity of this change, and of his own weakness for the effecting it, that instead of setting himself about it, (of himself only) he made his humble application to God for help and assistance, as Psal. cxxxix. 23. *Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* And Psal. li. 10. *Create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me.* Agreeable hereunto, God promised by his prophet Ezekiel, chap. xi. ver. 19. *I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, I will take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them a heart of flesh.* And chap. xxxvi. 23. 26. *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; a new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.* And this is what in the New Testament is called *sanctification*, renewing the mind into a state of holiness and regeneration, or being born again, which is said to be the work of the spirit of God, and is a fundamental doctrine of Christianity: for without it, man cannot enter the kingdom of God; and in the experience of it, consists the highest evidence of the Christian religion.

THE CONCLUSION.

THE sum of the argument in defence of the evidence of Christianity, in the foregoing pages, is this, There are evidences of the truth of our holy religion, arising from external testimonials, such as the prophecies of the prophets, the

the miracles of our Lord and his apostles, the credibility of the history of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the first publication of the gospel by his apostles, as the same are contained in the holy scriptures of the New Testament, all which ought to be duly regarded; and we have full as good ground to believe them, as the best attested histories of any facts whereof we are not eye-witnesses: in which sense, the Christian religion is to be defended upon the principles of right reason, and from the same motives that other matters of fact may be defended. But inasmuch as the principal design of the coming of Christ, was to reform mankind, to purify and sanctify the hearts of men, through the power of that grace and truth which is come by him; the principal evidence of the truth of it, consists in this, that by believing in the power and sufficiency of this principle, and obeying the same, it is found completely to answer that end; that is, true believers are actually and really reformed in heart and spirit, of sinners become saints, or, in the language of scripture, are washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of God.

That this was really the case with the primitive believers, has been abundantly proved already from the holy scriptures, and there is not the least shadow of reason to question the truth of it: and there being also, (notwithstanding the general declension or falling away, which came over the Christian church) some witnesses of the same in all ages, and even in this age, who have borne testimony to the truth of it; who in their certain experience of the good effects of their faith, have received a full confirmation of the truth of the Christian doctrine in general: they cannot therefore tell where better to place the
evidence

evidence of the Christian religion, than in this experience, which therefore they call the principal evidence; not to lessen or undervalue other helps or means of believing the doctrines of the gospel, but because in this consists the completion of the whole as to its great design, the reformation of mankind.

And for these reasons, I thought it not unreasonable at this time, when great industry is used to destroy the very foundation on which the Christian religion stands, which is *divine revelation*, and to substitute another, which is *human reason*, to remind the present age what the Christian religion was in its primitive state, (which seems to be very much overlooked at this time) by which they may judge what it ought to be now, and at all times.

And because all pretence to an evidence of this kind, in favour of Christianity, would be vain, if upon making proof of it there appeared no confirmation of its truth from experience, I would therefore take the liberty to add, that what I have writ on this subject, is not writ at uncertainties, or to be considered as a matter of mere opinion or speculation, or as an hypothesis, which may or may not be true, or, in the language of modern writers, as a scheme of religion of my own invention: but, (with humble and thankful acknowledgements I speak it) is the result of a fixed, settled judgment, grounded on a long trial of what I have recommended; in which, whilst duly regarding and attending to it, I never was disappointed; but always found it a present help in every needful time; which has so settled and stayed my mind, that (to the praise of him that has thus helped me, I mention it) it has not been moved from its steadfastness in the faith of the gospel, notwithstanding the fair glosses

glosses the present adversaries of religion have put upon their arguments against it, to which I am not altogether a stranger.

And, therefore, I would recommend it as a matter of the greatest concern to all, that they would make trial of this plain, but certain way, of the knowledge of God, and their duty to him, by following him in the way he would lead them. And as I am well assured there is no man, but has some knowledge of his duty which is certain to him, and for the truth of it, dare freely appeal to every man's experience; so the only way to improve rightly in understanding, is to be faithful to this, though ever so little. And they that enter into a religious course of life this way, find, in their faithful progress therein, that which was at first but a small thing, as a grain of mustard seed, to grow gradually, so as to become a great tree, bringing forth excellent fruits, both in knowledge and practice. And as this is the only door by which any man can rightly enter into the way of religion, so I would again make the most solemn appeal to the experience of mankind in general, whether ever any who thus trusted in the Lord, were disappointed or confounded.

I am sensible there have been some, who have pretended that they have, as they alledge, made an experiment in the closest and most solemn manner, and nothing extraordinary (as they pretend) has happened to them, but have found themselves, after all, just where they were. The reason of this I take to be, that they have overlooked this small plain thing, *viz.* that which discovers to them the pollutions and defilements of their own hearts, and sets their sins in order before them; as a thing too mean to proceed from God, and have with the Jews stumbled at it, or
with

with the *Greeks* accounted *foolishness*. Their expectation being raised to something of an exalted, extraordinary nature, (for such they imagine every thing that comes from God must be) instead of coming unto him in an humble, penitent frame of spirit, which is always the right beginning of a true Christian life, they, as they think, are disappointed. Not considering, that however small this may be in appearance, yet thereby a substantial foundation is laid for a life of solid virtue and piety; as those who have tried the experiment thoroughly, know very well, to their great comfort and satisfaction, as well as confirmation of the truth of the *Christian religion* in general.

I shall conclude, therefore, with the most earnest request to all concerned, that they will be just to themselves, by putting this very necessary affair rightly upon trial. Do the will of God, as the same is made known to you, and for that end wait upon him, and pray unto him for the *help of his grace* and *good spirit*; and by this means, you will gradually understand the doctrines of Christ; and as you grow in grace, and in the strength of it, you will grow more and more in the saving knowledge of him,

And you that know the Lord in this manner, follow on to know him in the same: you that have witnessed strength from him, wait continually for the renewing of it; and I am well assured, that they who do so, shall never fall, but an entrance abundantly will be admitted to them, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

I shall close the whole, therefore, with that excellent exhortation of the apostle, (by which it will fully appear, wherein a true Christian's strength and preservation consists in his judgment) Eph. vi. verse 10, 11, 12, &c. *Finally, my bre-*

thren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance,

SOME

SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
RELATING TO THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

WHEREIN

THE PRINCIPAL EVIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
IS EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED, UPON THE PRINCIPLES
OF REASON, AS WELL AS REVELATION:

WITH

Observations on some Passages in the Book,

INTITULED,

CHRISTIANITY AS OLD AS THE CREATION, SO FAR AS
CONCERNS THE DOCTRINE HEREIN ADVANCED.

PART II.

1 Pet. iii. 15. *Be ready always to give an answer to every
Man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with
meekness and fear.*

CONSIDERATIONS
FOR THE A.C.M.

THESE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

THESE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

T H E

P R E F A C E.

TH E subject of the ensuing pages is of the greatest concern and moment to mankind, and for that reason, I would request my readers to give it a thorough, close perusal, and not read it either cursorily or partially; for whether I have handled the subject clearly and justly, or not, this I am certain of, it is of that nature, that it is every one's highest interest to believe rightly about it, and to live and act accordingly.

The world must now judge, whether I have done any thing to purpose, in my endeavours to place this most necessary subject in a clear light: it is my satisfaction, that I can answer to my own conscience, as in the sight of God, for the sincerity of my intention; and if any person, with the like sincerity of intention, and true regard to the good of mankind, shall be so kind as to point out to me any mistakes I may have committed, it will be doing service to the cause of religion, and for that reason, very acceptable to myself; for there is nothing I more desire, than to have this subject rightly and clearly understood, and it will be

matter of rejoicing to me, let it come from any hand whatsoever.

I fear the persons I am opposing (one especially, whom I have particularly named and quoted) will think themselves somewhat unkindly treated, for being mentioned under the denomination of *Deists*, and opposers of *Christianity*; if I could have found a softer term that would have expressed the idea I intended, as clearly, I should willingly have used it: I am sensible that some of them pretend to be friends and advocates for Christianity, and whoever dips no farther into their writings, than the title page, may be ready to esteem them such; but if we peruse the whole, we shall find nothing, more or less, than an artful, laboured design, to subvert and destroy the *Christian system* in every part of it, which design insinuates itself the more successfully into the minds of the unwary readers, being introduced with a specious pretence of doing service to it: that this is not *gratis dictum*, I shall give the reader a general abstract of what is more particularly and apparently visible in one of their master-pieces, (at least so esteemed) intituled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*.

If to pick out the most difficult parts of the *Holy Scriptures*, in order to expose them at once to the view and contempt of the reader, by representing them as *unintelligible*, and consequently useless. If to represent
some

some facts there mentioned, with approbation, as contrary to our natural ideas of the *Divine Being*, and of man's duty to him and one another: if to attempt to invalidate the *prophecies* of the *Old Testament*, which were always understood to relate to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh: if to treat the person of our Lord himself, and his apostles with ignominy, by reviving the scandalous reproaches cast on them by the old opposers of *Christianity*. If to mention the great doctrines of *eternal rewards* and *punishments*, in such loose, unguarded terms, as plainly imply, that they do not firmly believe them: if to deny the reasonableness of that propitiatory sacrifice of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and *the remission of sins that are past* for his sake: if to deny the necessity and usefulness of a *divine aid*, for the living a *virtuous, pious life*, according to the rules of the *Christian religion*, which the *Holy Scriptures*, especially of the *New Testament*, abundantly bear testimony to, and which in the following treatise is proved to be a *rational principle*: if to charge all the abuses committed by any men, or set of men, professing *Christianity*, since the first introduction of it into the world, as the genuine effect and consequence of *Christianity* itself, and that in the most invidious and aggravating terms; I say, if to do all this, be not endeavouring to subvert and destroy *Christianity* in every part of it, I know not what is.

It is not my design to say any thing here to these several particulars, they are, for the most, undertaken by other hands, to whom I leave them, only as to the latter part, to wit, *that the charging the errors and mistakes, both in judgment and practice of the professors of Christianity, on the Christian religion, is an unjust and unreasonable charge*; let those who are guilty of those abuses answer for them: *Christianity*, in its original purity, is not at all affected by it; but as these abuses were brought gradually into the church, by departing from that *divine principle of grace and truth*, which is come by *Jesus Christ*, the *spirit of truth* promised, and given by him, which leads into, and preserves in all truth, and following our own imaginations, and the corrupt reasonings of flesh and blood; so the most effectual way for reforming all abuses, is for *Christians* to return to it, that *religion* may once more stand upon its original and only substantial foundation, which is the principal design of the ensuing treatise.

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CHAP IV.

The influence which the doctrine in the foregoing chapter may reasonably be supposed to have on our minds, in their religious conduct; with observations on some passages

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SOME

SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
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C H A P. I.
Containing the Occasion and Design of this Treatise.

UNDER the like religious concern of mind, by which I was led to publish a former Treatise in defence of the Christian religion, I am again engaged in spirit to publish some farther considerations on that subject.

In that former treatise I endeavoured to explain and recommend the principal evidence of the Christian religion, arising from the nature, end, and design of it; which, I apprehend, has been variously received, according to the different sentiments and prepossessions the readers have been under. Those who believe and profess Christianity sincerely, for the good they have received, and hope to receive from it, some of those, I understand, have been pleased to express themselves favourably of the design; as indeed it is reasonable to suppose, that an attempt of this nature (however mean the performance

mance may be) yet if it appears to be sincerely intended for the promotion of religion, in the most valuable part of it, would be favourably received by those who are not only pursuing the same thing, but actually in the possession, in some degree, of the good fruits and effects of it; of which, I doubt not, but there are some, amongst all the several denominations of Christians, however they may differ in some other circumstantial or less material points.

On the other hand, I have reason to believe there are some, and those who are principally concerned in the main design of that small essay, who think it does not answer the end chiefly proposed by it, which was to recommend and explain the principal evidence of Christianity, to those who were either doubtful concerning it, or in actual unbelief, of which we have too many instances in this corrupt age: these I understand have objected (or at least some, who are acquainted with their way of thinking, have objected for them), that the frequent quotations from the scriptures in that treatise have so prejudiced the minds of this kind of readers, I mean the opposers of Christianity, against it, that they would not be prevailed on to give it a reading; and that to make use of the scriptures, by way of proof of Christianity, is, as to them, begging the question, taking the thing for granted which is to be proved, proving a proposition by itself; which must be confessed to be a beggarly way of reasoning, and no wise applicable to the method in that treatise.

It is much to be lamented, that there are a set of people in a nation professing Christianity, so deeply prejudiced against the scriptures, that to make quotations from thence in any manner to serve the cause of religion, is esteemed by them sufficient to beget a dislike or contempt of that performance

performance. However, this is really the case with some, and therefore it may not be amiss to lay before the reader's view, for what reason I thought myself obliged to make use of so many quotations out of the scriptures, especially of the New Testament.

It is evident to any one who considers the thread of that discourse, that the use therein made of the scriptures was to give a plain account of the Christian religion, from the writings of the first publishers of it, which is (so far as concerns the written account of it) going to the fountain head, before it became mixed and blended with the inventions and additions of men, which make up a great part of that which now goes under the name of Christianity.

This, I then esteemed, and still think, a regular method, and absolutely necessary to make way for that which I intend, *viz.* a proof of the truth of it. For whoever undertakes to treat of any science or institution, ought first to define what that science is, of which he is about to treat; that is, in the present case, to declare what is meant by the words *Christian religion*, and then, by comparing the stated properties of it with something of the truth and certainty of which we are well satisfied, the truth and certainty of the thing is effectually proved and established. This is a well known method among mathematicians; that is, by clearly defining the terms of a question or proposition, and settling some properties of it, though at present the truth of those properties be not certain, but is the thing to be proved, that by comparing them with other propositions, or maxims, already known to be true, the truth of the proposition in question becomes established.

As this is a substantial method of reasoning, so to do otherwise, that is, to pretend to prove the truth

truth of something without defining what is meant by that thing, is very preposterous and uncertain ; for if the thing in debate be not clearly understood, all debates about it must be liable to the same uncertainty ; which is the true reason that so many books are writ, and arguments used, to no purpose, both on the subject of religion and otherwise, because men do not clearly know what they write or argue about, which must tend only to amuse, not to inform one another, and is the ready way to scepticism.

To apply this to the present occasion : the Christian religion in its present state, (though a thing very easy and intelligible in itself) yet is not rightly understood by too many of those who are in the profession of it ; but the generality take it implicitly, as delivered down to them by their fore-fathers, or taught by their several leaders, which hath produced great variety, and in some points, contradictions in sentiments, which cannot be all true. This led me to give the plainest account of it I was capable, out of the Holy Scriptures, which I reduced to the form of a definition, p. 11, and explained more particularly in the remaining part of that and the following chapters. But the use therein made of the scriptures, was not by way of authority to unbelievers, for I was very sensible that they are not so with them, (though to all good Christians, who know the true benefit of their profession, they are so, being known to *make wise unto salvation through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*) : but the scriptures were made use of in order rightly to state the thing in debate ; and, for proof of the truth of it, every man was referred to his own experience, to something which passes in his own mind, of the truth of which he cannot doubt, which, if sincerely

cerely consulted and regarded, would confirm to him the truth of that account of the Christian religion delivered in the scriptures.

And this is the true reason, why an attempt of this nature must be differently received and entertained. Those who have known the end of their faith and hope in some good degree answered, by witnessing *the work of salvation, through sanctification of the spirit and belief of the truth*, rejoice in every thing that tends to establish the general truths of Christianity, the good fruits and effects of which they are actual partakers of. Whereas, on the contrary, those who are strangers to these, either through wilfulness opposing, or through negligence disregarding, or by false corrupt reasons, silencing the secret calls and visitations of God, by which, (if they duly attended to them), they would become partakers of the same thing, cannot, as they pretend, (generally because they are resolved against it, and will not) see the strength or pertinency of an argument in favour of the Christian religion, drawn from the topic of experience; because, say they, *Whatever it may be to others, it is nothing to us who are ignorant of it.*

However, as all are not gone the same lengths in their opposition to Christianity, some being less, others more open to conviction; some resolving to oppose it, because it is contrary to their beloved lusts and passions, which they are determined to gratify at all hazards; others, through affectation of singularity, or an opinion of their own superior sense and understanding, compared with that of the first publishers of our holy religion, in which they pretend to see many defects, though they were never yet agreed what to substitute in the room of it. Both of these are very much shut to conviction; the one, through wilfulness, having given themselves up to follow their vicious inclinations;

tions; the other, through pride and conceitedness, having entertained so great an opinion of the beautifulness of their own conceptions, (as people are naturally very fond of the productions of their own brain) that it is very difficult for them to think of parting with them. But there are a third sort more honest and sincere than the former, who do not so much oppose, as doubt or question, the truth of our holy religion; there are some difficulties, they say, which they would be glad to have removed, some doubts which they want to have answered; *They cannot, they say, satisfy themselves, or render a reason to others, for some parts of the Christian system,* (which generally, when sifted to the bottom, are no real parts of it) for the sake of those, I am willing to publish some farther Considerations upon that subject, because I esteem them objects of every good Christian's kind regard. And as they are for a religion which is rational, and for which they may be able to render a reason when required; which is indeed a thing most desirable in an affair of so great consequence: I shall endeavour to prove the Christian religion, rightly understood, to be such, and to render a reason for it, arising from the nature of the thing, and the relation there is between God, as an All-wise, powerful Creator, and Preserver, and man, as a reasonable creature.

But before I enter upon it, I would make one general observation, which is, that though there is a manifest difference between those who oppose, or doubt of the truth of Christianity, as hath been already observed; some being openly and professedly vicious, others pretending to be patrons and practisers of virtue; yet, in truth, they agree in this, *that they are all of them, as such, real promoters of vice;* and it is hard to say which more so. There are some reasons to believe (which may seem

a paradox) that the more virtuous a person is, or appears to be, under that circumstance, the greater enemy he is to virtue; for this reason, because the better man an unbeliever is, the more he strengthens and encourages others in unbelief; that is, the more he contributes to destroy those restraints from vice, and obligations to virtue, which are peculiar to the Christian religion, and are in their nature the strongest and most powerful that can be; I mean, the firm belief of immortality, and of a future judgment, and of eternal rewards and punishments consequent thereupon, which are doctrines brought to light, or revealed by the gospel, and peculiar to it. Those who are in this belief, and abide in the sense, and under the influence of it, must act virtuously in all their conduct, under the strongest inducements of every kind, not only because a virtuous, religious, pious life, is reasonable in itself, and tends to our comfort and happiness in this life, to the health of our bodies and tranquillity of our minds (as it certainly does); but also, and more especially, because they know themselves to be accountable creatures, and believe they must give an account to God for their actions, and that according to the deeds done in this body, they shall at last be judged, and rewarded or punished everlastingly.

Whereas the unbelievers, those who are virtuous of them, act chiefly upon motives which relate to this life, the conveniences of the thing, and the good which it produces, in preserving the health of our bodies, and the peace and content of our minds, and the service it does for maintaining societies in order, &c. (all which are included in, and more effectually secured upon the Christian system). But as to a future judgment, and everlasting rewards and punishments after death, they are either wholly silent about them,

or speak of them in ambiguous terms, or even deny them; at least, as to their eternal duration: it being one of the principal designs of some of them, to free mankind from those slavish fears, and that anxiety, which the Christian religion, as they pretend, brings them under.

And though it must be acknowledged, that too many, who profess to believe the doctrines of immortality and a future judgment, do live and act as if they were not in earnest; yet it cannot be denied, but that these doctrines, in their nature and tendency, if duly regarded, are the greatest restraints that can be supposed (of any thing *extra nos*) against every thing that is evil; and therefore their acting viciously, is both contrary to their own principles, and a strong argument of the great depravity of human nature, and consequently that it has need of such a divine inward aid, as the Christian religion proposes to be always present with them, seeing the strongest motives and inducements (and such are those of a future judgment and eternal rewards and punishments) when considered at a distance, do not prevail upon some to live virtuously, &c. But the unbeliever, whether he acts the virtuous part, or the contrary, must be allowed not to be under the same powerful restraints from vice, or obligations to virtue, seeing, as hath been observed, he is not in the firm belief of immortality, and eternal rewards and punishments. And as for a divine assistance to do the will of God, he is so far from believing or expecting any such thing, that he even denies and disclaims it. In both which respects, the Christian religion is greatly preferable, the truth of which I shall now endeavour to prove.

C H A P. II.

Containing some Principles or Postulata, which are the Foundation of the Argument in Proof of the Christian Religion.

AND first, by the Christian religion I would be understood to mean, not the religion of Papists, (which is the farthest distant from it of any thing that bears the name) nor the religion of Protestants, or of any particular church or society of them distinct from others; though I believe there are good Christians of all societies, as well as that all societies have their defects and weaknesses, which they are too forward, imprudently, not to say uncharitably, to expose to the common enemies of the Christian name, who are well pleased, whilst they are endeavouring to subvert Christianity in general, to find that the several professors of it are helping them in that work, by biting and devouring one another; though it is matter of satisfaction that this temper is at present somewhat abated, and a spirit of charity does more and more (it is to be hoped) prevail among Christians of the several denominations, than formerly. But (not to digress too far) by the Christian religion, I mean the religion of the primitive church, that which was first preached and published to the world by the apostles and first ministers of the gospel, who received it from Christ himself: this I attempted to give some account of in my former treatise, p. 9. by way of definition, which that I may be clearly understood, and because this may fall into some hands which have not seen that former treatise, I shall here transcribe: "Christianity is a divine institution, by which God declares

himself reconciled to mankind, for the sake, and on the account of, his beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ, and what he did and suffered for them, on condition of repentance, amendment of life, and perseverance in a state of holiness; for which end he also offers them the help of his grace and good spirit, which is sufficient for that end; all which, taken together, may be called *salvation*; though, in a proper sense, salvation consists in the last, *viz.* in that help which men receive from the grace and good spirit of God, according to the words of the apostle, Rom. v. 10. *If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled unto God, by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.* Again, Ephes. ii. 8. *By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.* Tit. iii. 5. *According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."*

This is what I mean every where by the Christian religion, when I make use of that term; the truth of which I shall endeavour to prove by arguments drawn from the nature of the thing, and the relation there is between God as an all-wise, powerful, beneficent Creator and Preserver, and man as a reasonable creature. In order thereto it may be observed, that the Christian religion, according to this account of it, is a practical science, teaching mankind something to be done, and the means of doing it (as for the *credenda*, or things to be believed, I have spoken to them in my former treatise, in the 2d and 3d chapters, to which my readers are referred). That which the Christian religion teaches to be done, is allowed by its adversaries, to be in itself good and agreeable to our reasonable nature, and consonant with the sense of the best moralist, only the Christian ex-
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tends the matter of duty farther, carries it to a greater perfection than any other system of religion or morality ever did : inasmuch, as it not only reaches to our actions in particular cases, but to the habits and disposition of our minds ; so that a Christian, really such, is inwardly and habitually changed, the inclination and relish of evil being taken away, he has no desire after it, but an aversion to it at all times, and in every case ; the root from whence it springs being destroyed, and the love and relish of good being implanted in the room thereof. Such a one becomes gradually habituated to it, and brings forth good fruits agreeable, with as great pleasure, and much greater, than before he brought forth evil fruits, the general bent of his mind being now turned that way ; and this in scripture is called, *Putting off the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new man, being made partakers of the divine nature, renewed into the image of him that created him* : and is the peculiar design of the Christian religion, being the great end of Christ's coming in the flesh, essential to it, and inseparable from it, and is, in fine, the work of God.

Now then, if it can be proved that God really does work this work ; that is, does operate on the minds of men, for the changing of them inwardly and habitually from evil to good ; the Christian religion is established as to that main and essential part, *viz.* the influence which it has on the minds of men, for their improvement and reformation. And this I hope to do by an argument which appears to me reasonable, and such as the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of, (for it is in vain to expect mathematical demonstrations on religious or moral subjects ; for if they were capable of such, we should then have no more controversies about the one, than we have about the other).

In order to it, I suppose, in the first place, that there is a God, a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, who made and created all things of his own good pleasure, by the word of his power, and by the same, sustains and preserves them when made and created ; that as the creating of the world was the effect of his goodness, so he is continually communicating to his creatures of the same goodness, by taking care of them, by providing for them, supplying their wants, strengthening their weaknesses, preserving the several parts of his creation, not only in their existence, but in that order and harmony, and that constant relation one to another, in which they have existed from the beginning to this time, as a well ordered and beautiful piece of workmanship ; which care of the Divine Being is what is generally called by the name of *Providence*.

Again, I suppose that mankind, the most excellent part of God's creation in this lower world, as being endued with the faculties of reason and understanding, as well as having the use of speech, by which they can communicate to each other the sentiments of their minds, which faculties, all other creatures we are conversant with, are destitute of ; I say, this creature, notwithstanding the excellency of his nature, it is evident, has great defects and failings ; in particular, in that most noble part of him, his mind, the faculties of which, *viz.* the understanding, will, and affections, being evidently much depraved, and this depravity, having spread itself, in general, more or less throughout the whole species. By means of which, many of those, whom God has made reasonable creatures, act below the sphere of brute animals ; others not in so great a degree of depravity, yet all, more or less at times, acting contrary to the rules of right reason, and that good understanding

understanding, with which, as men, they are endued.

I do not meddle here with the inquiry, how this depravity came first into the world, but as it is evident there is such a thing, so I suppose it true, and take it for a *postulatum* in order to make way for the argument I shall build upon it. Only thus far I see no danger in asserting, it being reasonable to suppose it, that when God made man (and the same is applicable to any other intelligent being) he made him good, upright, sincere, without any mixture of evil, falsehood, or deceit. I cannot understand, that a creature, as coming out of the hands of a being perfectly pure and good, can be otherwise than such; but yet, though it is reasonable to suppose he made them good, it is as reasonable to suppose, he did not make them absolutely and unalterably so, (for there is none good in that sense but one, that is God) but in a finite, limited sense, as well as that he did not make them omnipotent, and omniscient. But the power and knowledge were finite and limited, otherwise, man in his created state had been, not only in the image, or likeness of God, but equal to him.

Again, as their goodness, power, and wisdom, is finite and limited, so as such it is alterable and fallible, and consequently liable to fall from that state, and can no otherwise be certainly preserved in it, but by the same infinite power by which it was at first made such. For that being, whose power and wisdom is finite and limited, is possible to be overcome or deceived, by another more powerful and subtle, which yet may be also finite and limited; or by not constantly attending, or adhering to that power which is infinite and unlimited, in which alone its preservation consists. For I cannot understand, how a being, whose power, &c. is limited and finite, and consequently

vincible and fallible, can certainly be preserved from falling, but by a power that is infinite; nor how when fallen, can be restored again certainly, and preserved from a relapse, but by the same power.

All which, taken together, is a rational account of the fall of man, and the original of evil as to him, as well as of the continuance and prevalence of it, and points directly to the only means of his restoration (of which more by and by); and is in substance, perfectly agreeable with the account given of it in holy scripture; in which, though there may be some things in the manner of expression hard to be understood, yet the thing, as there delivered, is easily to be accounted for in the reason and substance of it, when separated from the dust which men of perverse minds, enemies to the Christian faith, have raised about it.

But, not to dwell too long on the manner how sin or evil was first introduced among mankind, which has been matter of much unprofitable dispute, among those who are imprudently curious in affairs of this nature; it is sufficient for our present purpose, that it appears in fact, there is such a thing, and that it is spread universally among mankind, who all have been, in a greater or lesser degree, tinctured with, and under the power of it. And it is as evident, that whilst men remain in that state of depravity, though they become objects of the mercy of God upon repentance, yet are, till then, unreconciled to him. This is both agreeable to the reason of things, (for what agreement can there be between two things perfectly opposite and contrary to each other; as are the pure and holy God, and man in a state of pollution and defilement?) and is not denied or disputed by those who think and write soberly on the other side of the question, who generally agree in recommending

ing a virtuous life, a life according to the dictates of right reason, (which some of the heathen moralists call, *living agreeable to nature*) as the only way to happiness, or, in other words, to the favour of God.

Where then lies the point in dispute, between the Christian and the opposer of Christianity? *Answer.* In this principally, viz. By what means, man, in a state of depravity, and as such, out of the favour of God, may be delivered out of that state, and brought into a course of virtue and piety, and in consequence of it, reconciled again to God. The discussing of which shall be the subject of the next chapter.

C H A P. III.

Containing Arguments built on the foregoing Principles.

I Take it then for granted, that there is a God who created all things, and mankind in particular, good, whose care and providence is over all his creation, mankind, as well as the other parts of it: that mankind have declined from the state of purity and uprightness in which they were created, in which state they are unreconciled to God, and that they cannot become reconciled to God again, without returning to that purity and uprightness in which they were at first created, (or being sincerely entered into the way leading to it): for that which hath let or hindered their reconciliation to God, will continue to let (the same cause will ever produce the same effect) till it be removed or taken out of the way. The main question then is, How is this to be effected? By what means may an evil vicious man become pious
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and virtuous, and consequently acceptable to God? By making the best use he can of the powers and faculties which God has given him as man, say the Deists, which are completely sufficient for that end, by acting according to the dictates of right reason; which they sometimes call the *law of nature*, and the religion resulting from it, the *religion of nature*, or *natural religion*.

On the other hand, the Christian says, and I hope to make it evident, that the making the best use we can of the powers and faculties we have as men, is not a sufficient means to enable us to become pious and virtuous; and that reason, as mankind are endued with it, or any other power or faculty merely human is not a proper foundation to build religion, in any right sense, upon; but that to assert the sufficiency of it for that end, is inconsistent with all religion; and that religion, in the nature of the thing, necessarily supposes and implies a divine aid and assistance, distinct from, or superadded to those powers and faculties which we as men are endued with.

I have before supposed, that as man is an intelligent being, so he is a created being: in respect of the first, he is capable, in many cases, to judge rightly between truth and falsehood, not only as to the common affairs and occurrences of life, but the obligation and reasonableness of moral and religious duties, the maxims on which such an obligation is founded, being in many cases clear and evident: but in respect of the last, as he is a created being, his understanding and other faculties being finite and limited, though he can judge rightly of moral and religious duties in some cases, and act accordingly, yet he cannot certainly, and in all cases, be preserved both from error of judgment on the one hand, and errors in practice on the other, without

out assistance from him who is all-wise, and all-powerful; for if he could, his understanding and power would not on that supposition be finite, but infinite.

I have also supposed, that God, who created mankind, is absolutely and perfectly good, without any degree of evil, or of imperfection; and as he is so, it is reasonable to believe that he requires, that his creature man, in order to his acceptance with him, should be holy, simply without any exception or mixture of the contrary; every degree of evil being as such contrary to his divine nature. Agreeable to which, the commands of God in scripture, relating to that general duty which he requires of men as his creatures, are expressed in such terms as necessarily imply holiness or purity, in this extensive sense, as Levit. xx. 7. and xi. 44. *Ye shall be holy, or, be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.* Mat. v. 48. *Be you perfect, as your father which is in heaven is perfect.* 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. *As he that has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.* Again, 1 Theff. v. 22, 23. *Abstain from all appearance of evil, and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus.* I might add many more citations out of the scriptures of both testaments, (it being manifestly the general tendency of the sacred writings) but these I have chosen, (not so much by way of authority to the adversaries of Christianity, to whom I am sensible they are not so, but) because they express what I intend, in the clearest and fullest terms, (fuller than any other words I am at present capable to express them in) and contain this rational proposition, viz. That God, who is perfectly good and holy, requires that his rational intelligent creature

creature man should be like unto himself, pure and holy, free from all evil and defilement without distinction ; which is agreeable to the pure nature and perfection of the Divine Being, and that relation there is between him, as a most wise and powerful Creator, and man as an intelligent rational creature : and to admit of any distinction, in favour or allowance of any degree or kind of evil, is not only inconsistent with that relation, but opens a door, by which sin and iniquity, in every degree and kind, may, and does gradually enter, and is propagated in the world.

This is plain to any common observer of things, the worst of men quieting their own consciences in some sort, and excusing themselves to others, under the distinction of invincible infirmities, the frailties of human nature, the shortness of our understandings and other faculties, joined with the many strong temptations and provocations with which they are surrounded : all which, they pretend, render it absolutely impossible for any man to be preserved in a steady course of virtue and piety. Which would be a reasonable plea on this supposition, that mankind in these things are left to themselves ; but supposing that a divine aid is always at hand to help their infirmities, to enlighten their understandings, to give vigour to all the powers and faculties of the mind and body ; by this means, it becomes not only possible to eschew evil in every appearance of it, and do good in every instance of it, as the same is presented to us, and becomes our duty, but those who are long accustomed to the pursuit of virtue this way, their hearts (in the Psalmist's phrase) being enlarged, the faculties of their minds being improved, and renewed, run the ways of God's commands with delight ; a certain cheerfulness and alacrity is given them, by which the ways of virtue and wisdom

dom become ways of pleasantness, and all her paths, paths of peace. That men are in fact made partakers of such a divine aid and support, I am next to prove.

In order to it, let it be remembered, that I have also supposed, that God is not only the creator of mankind, but that his care and providence is continually over them, as well as over his creation in general. If this be allowed, it follows, that as man is the object of his Maker's care, the whole man is so, that is, both body and mind : for it is equally reasonable, at least, (though I think much more so) to suppose, that his care is over the latter as the former, that being what denominates or constitutes the man, or rational being ; and therefore, the most noble and valuable part, as well as that in its nature and constitution it is immortal, in both which respects it is most worthy of the care of its Creator.

This being supposed, the next inquiry is, wherein this care of the divine Being over the mind of man consists. It is most reasonable to believe, that his care and providence is over the several parts of his creation, agreeable to their particular natures, and their subserviency to the good of the whole ; this might be easily illustrated by an induction of particulars : but not to digress, his care over mankind, the rational intelligent part of his creation, is to preserve them in the due exercise of their reason, which comprehends all the faculties of their minds. In the due use of which, for the ends for which they were given us, consists our own happiness, and our subserviency to the happiness of one another.

That such a care over the minds of men is given them, appears from hence, because it is wanted so far, that without it men cannot certainly be preserved in a steady course of virtue and piety :
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for the faculties of our minds being finite and limited, and consequently as such, fallible, and liable to be diverted from the steady course of virtue and rectitude, in which alone mankind is acceptable to God; for the supplying this defect, there must of necessity be the care or superintendency of a being, whose power and wisdom is unlimited, and may therefore certainly be depended on; so that whoever lives in the firm belief of this, and constant reliance on it, will best be secured from mistakes, both in judgment and practice, in things relating to our present and future happiness: which I take to be a direct proof of a divine aid, which cannot be evaded, but by asserting, either that God does not require that men should be holy, just, and good simply, without dispensing with some defects and failings, (which if admitted, we cannot assign where such an abatement or exception will stop) or else, that man, as to his wisdom and power, is infinite and unlimited. The first is contrary to the absolute purity and holiness of the all-wise and powerful Creator. The second is contrary to the finite limited nature of man as a creature. And therefore we may reasonably conclude, that as the creatures, in their several subordinate classes, are dependent in some sort one on another, the superior directing and ordering the inferior, for the uses and purposes to which they were designed by the Creator of the whole; so the Creator being supreme, presides over all, especially mankind, the intelligent rational part of his creation; this last being most worthy of his care and providence, as being nearest in similitude to himself.

I know it is objected by some, *That the Creator of all things, having formed the universe, and placed the several parts of it in that order in which they now are, and at all times have subsisted, has ordained*
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certain laws of action and motion, agreeable to their several places and relations to the whole, and one another, in which order they are to move and act by his appointment: and as by this, the course of things without us is maintained, as we may observe, so our actions, as intelligent beings, are directed by the law of reason, otherwise called the Law of Nature, which God has implanted in all men for that end.

I allow it; but he has not by so doing left man to himself, as he has not by appointing laws of motion, &c. left the world in general without his continual care and providence over it; without which there is great reason to believe (notwithstanding the stated laws of motion which are said to be settled in it) that the whole would fall back into its original chaos; as there is as much reason to believe, that mankind, without his aid and assistance, would fall into the utmost confusion, as in fact a great part of mankind have done.

In short, *Providence* (which implies the care of God over the minds of men, as well as their bodies for the regulation and good government of them, as well as over the other part of his creation), being inseparable from the notion of God as Creator, whoever believes the one, must necessarily believe the other: and to deny either, leads directly to atheism, or, which is as bad, to Epicurean deism, which supposes the Deity an indolent unactive being, who does not concern himself in the affairs of the world; which is evidently inconsistent with all religion, as I observed in my entrance on this argument. For religion teaching mankind to worship God, that is, to pray to him for his aid and assistance, in order to our living agreeable to his will and our own happiness; to what end should we do this, if he does not concern himself in communicating such assistance? Yea, if we should suppose, (which yet is very absurd to suppose

pose) that his care is over the external part of the world, but that the mind of man has a sufficient guide in itself, of itself, both for knowing and practising all that is necessary for its present and future happiness; I think, religion is then a thing of very little moment, seeing, upon that supposition, we are capable of ourselves, without his assistance, to attain all that religion proposes; and if we are ever so religious, or put up ever so pious addresses to God, we have nothing to expect from him, but what we are already in the possession of, or have as much reason to hope for without his help; which strikes directly at the very foundation of all religion, *viz. Faith in God, and a firm trust and confidence in him, for a supply of all things necessary for soul and body*; which is the very first principle or ground-work of it, and is supposed or taken for granted by all those that enter seriously, and in earnest, on a religious course of life, and without it, all acts of worship are mere mockery, trifling with the Divine Being, and of no real benefit to ourselves, and consequently can be no duty at all, much less a reasonable one to mankind.

I know it is objected by some, *That as our powers and faculties, as men, are finite and imperfect, so there is no more required of us than an obedience suitable to such powers; so that whoever does what he can, according to that understanding and ability with which as man he is endued, does his duty, and no more is required of him.*

To put this matter in as clear light as I am capable, I do not, by asserting the necessity and usefulness of a divine aid in matters of religion, affirm, that whoever is in the belief of it, does from that time commence a perfect man, from all errors both in judgment and practice; for as no man becomes very wicked suddenly, but evil dis-
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positions grow gradually stronger by time, till at last they become confirmed habits, so those habits are not destroyed at once, but gradually weakened in time, and the contrary good dispositions raised and improved gradually, till at last they become confirmed habits of virtue and piety. And in the course of the proceeding of this good work, whilst the strength of evil habits is not entirely broken and destroyed, it is reasonable to suppose, that the effects of them may at times appear, where a constant careful watch is not kept, in some practices, according to the old course of conversation, which being the effects, not of wilfulness, but unwatchfulness, are no doubt pardonable; and God, who is merciful, will heal the backslidings of these, and love them again freely, upon their repentance and reformation, where there is a true sincerity in the main, and an honest application in heart and spirit to him for farther strength, to be preserved for time to come; by which means, as I said, the power of these evil habits will be gradually weakened, till at last they become entirely broken and destroyed: which certainly is possible, upon the supposition of a divine aid; and I would add, on no other bottom, and therefore in the whole progress of this good work, this belief ought to be always before us; otherwise we shall be in danger, not only of falling into evil, but of indulging ourselves in it, supposing it impossible to be delivered from the power of it; whereas those who are in the belief of a divine aid always attending them, though they fail sometimes, will not from thence be so discouraged as to give over the pursuit, but taking the blame to themselves, for their neglect and unwatchfulness, continue to pursue their course, attending with the greater carefulness unto their guide, believing, that notwithstanding their weak-

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ness, they have a sufficient strength on their side, if they duly regard it, which may certainly be depended on for preservation from evil, and an improvement and perseverance in the way of virtue and piety. So that on the one hand, they have the greatest encouragement to enter into, and persevere in the way of virtue and godliness, believing the complete attainment of that state possible by divine assistance; and on the other hand, if through unwatchfulness they should sometimes be overtaken with a fault, they do not therefore despair, nor are they so discouraged, as to think the success impossible, but rather (having applied with great humility to the throne of grace for pardon and forgiveness) they become the more quickened in their diligence, not knowing how long it may please God to extend his mercy, or continue his divine assistance, or even prolong their lives in this world.

Having premised thus much in answer to the objection, I say, that though our powers and faculties as men, are finite and imperfect, yet inasmuch as a divine assistance is present with men, God may justly, and does require of them holiness, in that extensive sense before mentioned, agreeable to his own holy pure nature; and to say otherwise, that he admits of evil in any kind or degree of it, is to open a door for the most wicked and profligate persons, to plead for, and excuse their wickedness, and is as absurd, as to go about to reconcile light and darkness, good and evil, or to make the terms of contradictory propositions both true.

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C H A P. IV.

The Influence which the Doctrine in the foregoing Chapter may reasonably be supposed to have on our Minds, in their religious Conduct: with Observations on some Passages in the Book intituled, Christianity as old as the Creation, &c.

IT is time now to consider the influence which the doctrine of a divine aid may reasonably be thought to have on mankind, respecting their religious conduct; which will bring us nearer to the principal point, *viz.* How far the Christian Religion is confirmed and established by it.

And first, in general, what a strong inducement to a virtuous, religious course of life, is the firm belief and persuasion, that God, to whom we must be accountable for the deeds done in the body, is always present with us, as a witness of our actions? This in the nature of the thing, if it be constantly and strongly impressed on the mind, must produce great awfulness and care, not only in our words and actions, but our very thoughts; so that a person who lives under the influence of this belief, can no more think or design evil, or admit of any thought unworthy of God, or that relation there is between him and mankind, or to the injury or prejudice of his fellow-creatures, than he can speak or act things of that tendency, well knowing that the inward thoughts of his heart are altogether known to him, as well as the loudest words, and most public actions.

But if to this belief of the presence of God with men, be added a belief of his care and providence over them, that he not only sees and observes their thoughts, but directs them to such objects as

are agreeable to his will, and out of the contrary, and that he is continually affording them his help to embrace the one, and eschew the other; all which has been already proved from the plain and acknowledged principles of providence, and the ideas men must have of the divine Being, as the Creator and Preserver of the world: I say, where this belief takes place, and an obedience accordingly, what can there be wanting to render mankind virtuous and pious, and consequently acceptable to his maker? Must not such as are thus influenced, act with great awfulness and sincerity in every part of their conduct, keep the strictest watch over their minds, that they may be rightly directed in the way of their duty? And when they are so directed, what great encouragement have they to set about practising accordingly, having the help of an all-wise and almighty Being present with them, to assist them in their so doing? The great advantage of such a belief, and of a conduct agreeable thereto, may be farther illustrated by its contrary. Is it not evident to any serious observer of things, that the great source, from whence springs that flood of wickedness, and those unaccountable practices, unworthy of rational creatures, so common among mankind, is derived from their disregarding, neglecting, or casting from them, the thoughts of his presence with them; the vulgar, too many of them, looking on the divine Being as something at a great distance, confined to the heavens above, from whence, by an easy transition, it is natural for them to suppose, that they can hide themselves from his notice, the latter having in it nothing more absurd than the former; and wherever this is the case, what hinders them from doing any thing the most wicked and abominable, that their vile lusts may prompt them to?

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And though others, who have accustomed themselves to a more refined way of thinking, (as they suppose) cannot deny his omnipresence; and some of them are pleased to acknowledge in general terms, that he concerns himself in human affairs, yet, when their scheme is sifted to the bottom, it will appear to be only words without meaning; for at the same time they tell us, that the use of those faculties, by which men are distinguished from brutes, is the only means they have to discern whether there is a God, and whether he concerns himself with human affairs, or has given any laws, and what those laws are; or in other words, that God has given mankind no other means, by which they might know what he wills them to know, believe, and practise, but the use of reason, human reason, &c. This then, according to them, is the only principle of knowledge, and the same they tell us, is the only principle of action, for they deny that there is any principle of action distinct from it, and assert that reason, however fallible it may be, is all, rational creatures have to trust to. Upon which I observe, if this be the case, how does God concern himself with human affairs to any good or profitable purpose? If he does not influence their minds, then all his concern is for their bodies, which to affirm, is most unworthy of God, to imagine that he takes care of the body only, the earthly, material part of us, formed of the like materials with the bodies of other animals, and neglects the soul, by which chiefly mankind are distinguished from them, and superior to them; and yet this is the necessary consequence of these modern schemes: for if he does not influence them as to their knowledge or practice, as they affirm, this being all the influence which serves to any good end or purpose; therefore, as I said, for them to tell us,

that God concerns himself with human affairs, are words without a meaning; for he does not, upon their principles, concern himself at all with them, but leaves them entirely to themselves, which deprives mankind of the most certain ground of knowledge, and stability in practice, respecting their religious and moral conduct.

I expect it will be now enquired, *If God, as hath been asserted, does concern himself with human affairs, by influencing the minds of men, respecting both their understanding and practice, by some principle of knowledge and action, distinct from their rational faculty, how, or after what manner, does he influence them? And by what means may this principle, when it operates, be distinguished from the ordinary operations of our natural faculties?*

The solution of this inquiry I take to be necessary, before we come to the application of this whole argument to the Christian Religion; and the more seasonable at this time, because a late* author has been pleased to treat the thing as unintelligible, and a whole society of religious people for its sake, with some contempt; but to say nothing of the people, if the thing be established, the contempt, cast upon them for its sake, is effectually removed.

It may therefore be inquired on this occasion, first, *How is it to be conceived as a thing possible, that there should be two distinct principles of knowledge and action, the one human, and the other divine, in the same person? Will not the one destroy the other, or at least suspend the exercise of it for a time, so that whilst we are under the influence of a divine principle, our natural understanding is laid aside or suspended, and when we are in the exercise of our na-*

* Christianity as old as the Creation, p. 183, &c.

tural understandings, we have then so far nothing to do with the divine principle?

If this be the case, as the above writer has suggested, men, destitute of all reason, were as capable of knowing all matters of religion, as if they had been ever so rational : which would indeed be an undeniable consequence, if the divine principle contended for did operate on men as mere machines or brute animals. But none in their senses ever asserted that, but on the contrary, that it operates on them as rational creatures ; and therefore, that men, destitute of all reason, can know any thing at all, much less all matters of religion, by the help of any principle whatever, is to say, that men act rationally without reason, and know without a capacity of knowledge ; a solecism which one would not expect from so great an advocate for reason.

But to come directly to the point, it is so far from being inconceivable, that there should be two principles of knowledge and action (as before) in the same person, that it is easy to conceive, inasmuch as it is supposed, that the divine principle does not act in contradiction, or inconsistency, to right reason, (and consequently so far as mankind are endued with it, and act agreeable to it, it acts in perfect harmony therewith) for it is impossible that the divine principle should direct any thing, or move to any action, which is not perfectly agreeable thereto ; but it being evident, that our faculties as men, are, or, as the late mentioned author acknowledges, may be fallible and uncertain ; the end of the divine principle's operating on the mind of man, is to correct the errors of it, to be an assistant to our faculties, that they do not err from truth and rectitude, either in understanding or practice : to say that this is destroying my understanding, or is inconsistent with it,

or impairs it in any respect, is full as absurd as to say, that if a person well versed in any art or science of which I am ignorant, should carefully instruct me in the principles or practices of it, that this person in so doing, impairs my understanding, which is so far from being so, that he improves and enlarges it: or can I be said, when attending to his instructions, to lay aside my understanding? or am I as capable, without any reason or understanding at all, to apprehend what he teaches, as if I were ever so rational? No man in his senses will say so; and yet this absurdity, as great as it is, is justly chargeable on this great pretender to reason.

But he goes on: "It is strange that all mankind should have a principle of acting, of which they never were sensible, nor can these modern discoverers tell them what it is, or how it operates." But why modern discoverers? If this author has read his bible with any other design than to find faults in it, he must be convinced, that it is so far from being a modern discovery, that it is as old as mankind, and from the nature of the thing, that it is as extensive as the human race: the spirit of God striving with man universally before the flood, as well as after, not only among the people of Israel, to whom besides outward laws and statutes, he gave his good spirit to instruct them, though many of them rebelled against it; but also among the Gentiles, in whose writings there are clear hints of a divine principle, under different names, distinct from human reason, instructing mankind; so that it is far from being a modern discovery.

But to return to the question, How does it operate? Does it operate as a *medium incognitum assentiendi*, in a manner we know not how? or does it operate in a manner well known? Certainly

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ly not the first; for how can a principle, which is in itself unknown, be the ground of knowledge? How can that which is uncertain produce certainty? It must therefore be concluded, that as it comes from God, it brings with it an evidence of its divine original, which consists in this, that it operates agreeably to the divine nature, *i. e.* as God is goodness and truth, and purity in perfection, so this leads to all these, and in order to it, bears a constant testimony in the secret of all hearts, against evil in every appearance of it, though never so secretly contrived or committed; the most secret inmost thoughts of the heart being laid open and brought to light by it, and the state of the mind discovered to itself, as plainly as face is discovered to face in a glass; so that he that would turn from it, cannot by all his false reasoning escape its notice; but as often as he acts contrary to these plain discoveries, must confess, that he condemns himself in the thing which he allows: and this is the state of all vicious persons, remaining such, till by frequent repetition, and long continuance in rebellion, it pleases God to withhold those secret kind discoveries from them, and leave them to themselves, and then, (though from the consideration of the great benignity and long-suffering of God, I believe that does not often befall mankind in this life, but when it is so) such, though they retain their natural understandings in other respects, yet they lose them as to the sense of evil which they before had; which is a plain distinction between an understanding received from God, and an understanding merely human, the one plainly subsisting without the other.

But this is not all the evidence of its divine original, which this principle brings along with it; for as it constantly bears testimony against the
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very least appearance of evil, so it leads the mind, by degrees, into a state of unspotted purity and holiness, agreeable to its own pure nature, discovering to it, not only actions and things which are good, but searching to the bottom, and bringing to light the secret springs and motives of all actions; so that whatever a person does, thus influenced, he does in truth and sincerity, with an upright heart, as unto God; such an one, not only abstaining from practising evil, but abhorring and detesting it, not only practising good in such particular instances as fall in his way, but loving and delighting in it: in short, it is the perfection of goodness and virtue it points at, and leads to, which evidences that it comes from God; and though men sincerely engaged in the pursuit of this excellent attainment do not presently arrive unto it; yet when they are once entered in the way to it, and have made some successful advances therein, by a sincere humble application in heart and spirit unto God, for his divine aid and assistance, they are encouraged to proceed in the same manner, and in their so doing, experience farther advances in the way of virtue, which is a solid ground of farther encouragement for them to persevere in it to the end.

And this I take to be the most reasonable, as well as most effectual means for the producing a religious, virtuous conduct in life, universally among mankind. For as it is most agreeable to the perfections of the divine nature, to suppose that he made mankind originally good, and consequently, that what evil there is among men, they themselves are the authors of it: so I appeal to the judgment of all unprejudiced advocates for reason, which of the two is most rational, *That man who has marred that goodly image of virtue and rectitude, in which he was created, should restore himself*

himself into it, by his own understanding, power, and ability, (the wrong application of these being the cause of his defection into evil). Or, that the great and good God, who made man good, should restore him again into it, by interposing with his divine aid and assistance. I think it may said, *Res ipsa loquitur*, the matter speaks for itself.

I add, the evidence of this divine principle, from the manner of its operation, viz. that as it discovers evil in the root and conception of it, and virtue in the secret springs and motives to it, so it does this in such a lively and vigorous manner, as gives strength to all the faculties of the mind, in those who attend unto it, to obey its precepts, and effectually fortifies them against all temptations and provocations to the contrary: that it does all this with an evidence and perspicuity, which exceeds what generally accompanies the ordinary operations of the rational faculties without this assistance; that it often brings before our minds certain truths relating to our present duty, and future happiness, when we least of all think of them, or are solicitous about them; that it sometimes discovers things, which we never before thought of, in such a clear light, that what was before hidden from us, at once becomes easy and familiar to us; and lastly, that in our obedience to this inward law, we enjoy such solid peace, and strong consolation in spirit, that (though it has a reasonable ground and foundation which we can easily account for, and in that respect, is plainly distinguishable from enthusiasm in the worst sense of the word) the enjoyment of it cannot be described by words, being above even our understandings, and much more above any expressions; agreeable to which, the scriptures speak of the *Peace of God as passing all understanding, and the love of Christ passing knowledge, that it hath not entered into the heart*

heart of man to conceive the good things which God has in store for them that loved him; and yet that God, says the same apostle, bath revealed them unto us by his spirit. The sense of which is a comfortable foretaste or earnest, of that future inheritance which all good men are in the full hope and expectation of, and are a good evidence of it; that as God gives them at times some enjoyment of it, and raises at other times strong appetites and desires after it in a greater measure, so they are in the firm belief, that these appetites are not given them in vain, but that what is wanting in this life of the full fruition of that which they are now thirsting after, they shall enjoy in complete fulness, in that life which is to come.

I have been thus particular in explaining this principle, because the author last quoted has been pleased to say, *That these modern discoverers cannot tell what it is, or how it operates.* I hope I have by this time told both, and he himself had sufficient opportunity to know, that the people, he there mentions, always professed it to be a divine principle, which they call by divers names, as the *Spirit of God, the Word of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Grace of God, the Light of Christ, &c.* by which names the penmen of the Holy Scriptures also call it; and as this is so, I would recommend it to him in the most serious manner, to consider, how he can clear himself from the imputation of blasphemy, in calling it first, a *senseless notion*, and which is yet worse, *one of their ugliest brats.* Certainly a more decent word might have been expected from him, even in a reverend regard to a divine principle, though he thought the people pretending to it were mistaken; and after all, I must take the liberty to tell him, that what he is pleased to call a *senseless notion*, and
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ugliest brat, is, and will be, the principal obstacle in the way of his darling notion, and what, I doubt not, will sooner or later disperse those fogs, which men of corrupt minds, under the notion of more refined reason, have raised of late in the Christian world: I shall only add in this place, with respect to this writer, and his performance, that whatever his sentiments may be, it is impossible for him to prove, that God has not given mankind such an help as I have been contending for; on the contrary, there are good reasons, from the nature of things, to believe that he has given it. And on this account, there is the greatest reason for him, and all others, at least to treat the thing with modest caution and decency, and not to make it the subject of banter and ridicule, lest in their opposition against it, in the phrase of the modest Gamaliel, *Haply they should be found* (and they cannot, I say, assure themselves of the contrary) *even to fight against God*.

C H A P V.

Containing some farther Observations on the last mentioned Writer.

THE opposition which the last mentioned writer has made to this plain principle of knowledge and action, distinct from human reason, will appear yet more unaccountable, by shewing that after all he has said by way of ridicule upon it, and his strenuous contending for the sufficiency of reason, human reason, which, as he says, *is all, rational creatures have to trust to*; in plain contradiction to himself, he has clearly and fully asserted the thing which he opposes, in these words,

words, which, though expressed interrogatively, yet imply the strongest assertion *. “ To press
 “ this matter farther, let me ask you, Whether
 “ there is not a clear and distinct light, that en-
 “ lightens all men, and which, the moment they
 “ attend to it, makes them perceive those eter-
 “ nal truths, which are the foundation of all
 “ our knowledge; and is it not God himself who
 “ immediately illuminates them?”

Upon which I would observe, if by this clear and distinct light, he means distinct from the faculty of reason which it enlightens, he has given up the point, and is at once fallen into that which he elsewhere calls a *senseless notion*. Or if by the word *distinct*, he means only something declaratory, and of the same import with the word *clear*, it comes still to the same; for, as he asserts, that it enlightens all men, (by which he must mean, if he means any thing, that it enlightens the rational faculty of all men): Is not that which enlightens, and that which is enlightened distinct? Is not that in man which makes him capable to perceive, &c. and that which is made capable, two different things? But to put the matter out of all doubt, If it be God himself who illuminates men, are not God and man distinct? And if God does this immediately, he is certainly present with them for that purpose; and if so, they have something else to trust to, besides those faculties by which they are distinguished from brutes, besides their own reason, fallible as it may be.

But perhaps it may be alledged, that this author does not intend by this manner of expression, that all our knowledge arises from this imme-

* Christianity as old, &c. p. 11.

diate illumination of God himself, but only those eternal truths, which are the foundation of our knowledge. Well, if the truths discovered by the illumination of God himself, be the foundation of all our knowledge, then all our knowledge is built upon it. But to go with him to the bottom of this matter, there being nothing which I more desire, let us consider what he writes, p. 180, 181, 182. first, in order to define what he means by the word reason, he begins, “ When we attribute any operation to it, as a “ distinguishing between truth and falsehood, &c. “ we mean by it the rational faculties; but when “ we ascribe no such operation to it, as when we “ give a reason for a thing, &c. we understand “ by it any medium, by which our rational fa- “ culties judge of the agreement or disagreement “ of the terms of any proposition. And if an “ author writes intelligibly, we may easily dis- “ cern, in which of these two senses he takes the “ word. But to go to the bottom of this mat- “ ter, it will be requisite to give a more distinct “ account of reason in both these senses.

“ By the rational faculties, says he, we mean “ the natural ability a man has, to apprehend, “ judge, and infer, the immediate objects of “ which faculties are not the things themselves, “ but the ideas the mind conceives of them; “ while our ideas remain single, they fall under “ the apprehension, and are expressed by simple “ terms; when joined, under the judgment, and “ expressed by propositions; when so joined as to “ need the intervention of some other idea to com- “ pose them with, in order to form a judgment, “ they become by that intervention the subject “ of inference or argumentation, and this is “ termed syllogism or argument. It must be ob- “ served too, that all the ideas we have or can “ have

“ have, are either by sensation or reflection; by
 “ the first, we have our ideas or what passes or
 “ exists without; by the second, of what passes
 “ or exists within the mind, and in the view or
 “ contemplation of these, consists all our know-
 “ ledge, that being nothing but the perception
 “ of the agreement or disagreement of our ideas.
 “ Any two of these when joined together, so as
 “ to be affirmed or denied of each other, make
 “ what we call a *proposition*; when considered a
 “ part, what we call the terms of that propo-
 “ sition, the agreement or disagreement of which
 “ terms, being expressed by the rightly affirming
 “ or denying them of each other, is what we
 “ call truth; the perception of their agreement
 “ or disagreement, is what we term knowledge;
 “ this knowledge accrues either immediately on
 “ the bare intuition of these two ideas, or terms
 “ so joined, and is therefore stiled *intuitive know-*
 “ *ledge*, or *self-evident truth*; or by the interven-
 “ tion of some other idea or ideas, as a common
 “ measure for the other two, and is therefore cal-
 “ led the medium, by which reason judges of
 “ their agreement or disagreement, and this is
 “ called *demonstrative knowledge*, which is never
 “ to be had without the help of the other; for
 “ if there were not some propositions, which
 “ need not to be proved, it would be in vain
 “ for men to argue with one another, because
 “ they then could bring no proofs but what need-
 “ ed to be proved. Those propositions, which
 “ need no proof, we call *self-evident*; because,
 “ by comparing the ideas signified by the terms
 “ of such propositions, we immediately discern
 “ their agreement or disagreement; this is, as I
 “ said before, what we call *intuitive knowledge*,
 “ and is the knowledge of God himself, who sees
 “ all things by intuition, and may, I think, be
 “ called

“ called *divine inspiration*, as being immediately
 “ from God, and not acquired by any human
 “ deduction or drawing of consequences. This
 “ certainly is that divine, that uniform light,
 “ which shines in the minds of all men, and en-
 “ ables them to discern whatever they do discern,
 “ since without it there could be no demonstra-
 “ tion, no knowledge, but invincible obscurity
 “ and universal uncertainty.”

I have quoted him thus at large, because I would not be thought to wrong his sense. And by this time it clearly appears, what he means, p. 11. by those eternal truths which are the foundation of all our knowledge, *viz. self-evident propositions*; the knowledge of which he calls *divine inspiration*, as coming immediately from God himself, and is the foundation of all our knowledge: but he does not allow, that the knowledge built on this foundation is divine, and comes immediately from God himself, but is acquired by human deductions, and drawing of consequences. So that according to him, God lays the foundation, and affords the materials of knowledge, and men build upon that foundation, and with those materials; for though these propositions, and the simple ideas of which they are compounded, are self-evident, yet their agreement or disagreement with others is not, or may not be so, but must be found out by our own study and application of thought, by the use of our reason, fallible as it may be.

To apply all this to the knowledge of religious matters, it must be allowed, that there are self-evident truths of that sort, the perception of which our author acknowledges may be called *divine inspiration*, as being immediately from God himself; but the perception of other truths, or propositions depending on these, which arise from the agreement of these with other ideas or pro-
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 positions;

propositions, he says, is acquired by human deduction, or drawing of consequences, which are, according to him, not from God immediately, but become known to us by the mediation of these self-evident notions or propositions. Now, I would appeal to the judgment of any impartial person, who is not resolved at all adventures to support a scheme, supposing, as he has asserted, that these self-evident notions or propositions come immediately from God, whether it is not most reasonable to believe, that the knowledge of other truths or propositions, which depend on their agreement with these, are also from him. For is it not reasonable, that the Divine Being should interpose there, where his interposition is most wanted, and where without it, we are in most danger of being deceived? I believe every impartial person will allow this. And is not this the case in the more complex notions, and compounded propositions, arising from several of these simple plain truths interwoven with others not so obvious to our understandings? It is here the only difficulty lies, and consequently in these we want help, and are in danger of being deceived ourselves, and deceiving others, *viz.* in the application of these plain rules or measures to the actions of life, where there are great variety of cases and circumstances, not easily perceivable at all times, as to their agreement or disagreement with these self-evident rules and measures.

For instance, it is a self-evident truth, *That I ought to render to every man his due, that I ought not to abuse my body with lust, or any other intemperance, &c.* But when these rules come to be applied as measures to our particular actions, there is a danger from the prevalency of temptations, and the strength of our appetites, confirmed by long custom and habit, lest we should deviate from

from them in those particulars, if left to ourselves; and therefore, there is then the greatest need of a divine monitor, to bring to our remembrance those rules of temperance and justice, and shew us their agreement or disagreement with the action under present consideration, and excite us to act or forbear acting accordingly. I say, this is evidently most worthy of God, and for want of regarding this, many wise men, who have had right notions of virtue and vice in general, have failed in acting agreeable thereto in particular cases. So that it appears evident to me, that the immediate interposition of the Divine Being is necessary in these cases, in order to shew the agreeableness of these rules to every particular action or circumstance, and fix our minds in their attending to them; which without it, are in danger of wandering from them, or being partial in favour of some prevailing beloved lust or passion.

Which this author himself, in contradiction to what he had before advanced, of human deductions, &c. confesses in effect, p. 184. *Were it not for these self-evident notions, which are the foundation of all our reasonings, there could be no intellectual communication between God and man, nor, as we are framed, can God ascertain us of any truth, but by shewing its agreement with those self-evident notions, which are the tests by which we are to judge of every thing, even the being of a God, and natural religion; which, though not knowable by intuition, are to be demonstrated by such proofs which have mediately or immediately a necessary connection with our self-evident notions.*

Here is first an intellectual communication between God and man supposed, (which, by the by, must be between two, oitherwise it is no communication) by the means of these self-evident notions, which come immediately from God: and

not only so, but he also ascertains the truth of propositions not self-evident, by shewing their agreement with these self-evident notions; so that all our knowledge, by his own confession, comes from God. For it all consists, either in our perception of these self-evident propositions, or their connection with others not so, and according to him, it is God that shews men both; and therefore, to carry his notion its full length, it is God that communicates all our knowledge to us, not only relating to matters of religion, but every thing capable of knowledge; for instance, take any proposition in Euclid, the truth of it is found either by the agreement of the several terms with certain axioms which are self-evident, or with certain propositions already demonstrated; which, in that case, are to be considered as self-evident axioms, or with some or other of both these: but according to him, it is God that discovers immediately the truth of these axioms, and their agreement with the terms of the propositions; and the case is the same, let the matter of our knowledge be what it will. So that this author is the greatest enthusiast, or pretender to inspiration, by making all our knowledge, of what kind soever, to come immediately and directly from God; which is a plain contradiction to the general tendency of his work, and a more senseless notion than any society of people that I know were guilty of; for the people he there mentions always distinguished between things and things, and between knowledge and knowledge, as the primitive Christians also did, between the things of a man, and the things of God; and that the first were knowable by the spirit, or rational faculty of a man, and the last knowable by the spirit of God.

There seems to be one difficulty yet remaining, which I would endeavour to remove in this place,
for

or the applying this whole argument to the Christian Religion with more clearness, which is this, allowing all that has been said, that there is a divine principle which discovers to men their duty, and excites and helps them to the performance of it, yet as it operates on them as rational creatures, the faculty of reason is that alone which judges of it, as to the truths in speculation, and the nature and obligation of those precepts or rules of action which it discovers to it: so that reason is that in which all centers ultimately, and is therefore what we must have recourse to for certainty, whether what comes before our minds be the dictates of a divine principle, or the result of our own thinking; and if so, is not reason the criterion by which we judge of their truth, and consequently the superior, or rather only ground of certainty?

I hope I have done this objection justice; I am sure I would do so, for there is nothing which I more desire, than to sift this most necessary affair to the bottom, by putting it in the clearest light it is capable of.

For answer, I say first, that to compare the divine principle with human reason, as to superiority or precedency, is to compare things which ought not to be compared; for without doubt, a divine principle (supposing there is such a thing), is infinitely superior to any faculty merely human, in the nature of the thing. This will farther appear by considering the different operations of the one, and the other principle; for though it is asserted (and I hope rationally proved according to the nature of things), that there is a divine principle in man, to instruct and assist him in matters of religion; yet it is plain that this principle, and the faculty of reason operate differently, the one as an instructor, the other as the instructed; the one as a teacher, the other as a learner; accordingly

ingly, God is said in holy scripture, *To teach the humble of his ways, and to guide the meek in judgment, and to shew unto man what his thoughts are*: all which necessarily imply, both a diversity of principles, and different manner of operations; and yet not so different as to act separately, but jointly, the one under the direction and assistance of the other. And this is so plainly the truth of the case, that it is impossible it should be otherwise; for as the understanding, or rational faculty of man, being a limited, fallible principle, cannot know certainly the things of God, or religious matters, (it being evident, that all the most absurd idolatries and vain superstitions among the heathens, as well as many absurd doctrines and practices among Christians, have sprung from this root when left to itself), so the divine principle cannot instruct mankind in those things, but as it acts upon the understanding or rational faculty; for brute animals, remaining such, are not in their natures capable of any such instruction: so that it is the divine principle that presents objects to our understandings, assists and enlarges the understanding to apprehend them; but the understanding, as a mere human faculty, is not therefore a judge of the truth and certainty of what the divine principle discovers, as a faculty superior to it, because it derives its certainty from the divine principle, which is therefore the principal ground of certainty, and not subject to the judgment of any other. Human reason, or any faculty merely human, is a weak, fallible, uncertain principle; but the faculty reason considered in itself, right reason, which is another word for truth, is certain and unchangeable, being an emanation from God himself, a gift given by him to correct the errors, and supply the defects, and strengthen the weaknesses of our faculties. In short, there must be a ground of certainty somewhere,

where, or else all centers in scepticism, (which is a miserable state of things, unworthy to suppose the God of knowledge and wisdom should be the author of) and whoever look into themselves, and observe the weakness of their own faculties, will not place it there: where then may we place it, but in him who is the author of our being, and of all the faculties and powers of body and mind? Who so fit to inform the judgment, rectify the understanding, and strengthen the will, as he that formed them? Who so fit to search the heart and try the reins, as he that made the heart, and gave mankind all the capacity he has of knowledge and action, and every thing leading and appertaining thereto? And to say, that the discovery which God makes to the mind, and the helps which he affords them, are subject to our understandings, as to a more sure touchstone or rule of truth, is to make the creature wiser than the creator, to set the learner above his teacher; which though sometimes it may be the case between mortal men, *viz.* that a person by reason of a larger capacity, or a greater application and study, may in time exceed his instructor; and those who are under the influence of a divine instruction, may become wiser than their teachers, as the Psalmist declares, Psal. cxix. 98, 99, 100. Yet this can never be the case between a creature, however qualified, and his creator; it is so far from it, that the more any know of God, and their duty to him in the way of his teaching, the more they become sensible of the shortness of their own capacities, and the greatness of the divine wisdom, power, and goodness, which leads them to humble, modest thoughts of themselves, in which state, they are still more in the way to receive instruction and help from him in all things necessary for their present and future happiness. So that their

whole life is one continued state of humble dependence on him for wisdom and strength; first to know what the good and acceptable will of God is, and then to do the same.

And this modest, humble depending state of mind, joined with a certain clear evidence of the truth, which always accompanies it, is what distinguishes to a mind rightly disposed, the teaching of God, from that which arises from the ordinary exercise of our own faculties without that help, which being the effect of our own labour of mind, the product of our own study and application, the person who is enriched in knowledge this way, (as he supposes) is apt to value himself upon it: knowledge thus acquired in its nature is apt to puff up, but charity, love to God and man, which is the principal thing which God teaches, edifies the person exercised therein, builds him up in a godly, virtuous, religious life, which is the end of all religion.

By this time, I hope enough has been said to convince those who are honestly disposed to give the argument its due weight, that God has given, and continues to give to mankind a divine aid, for knowing and practising what is agreeable to his will, and consequently tends to their present and future happiness. It remains now to apply this whole argument to the Christian Religion, and consider how far the truth of it is confirmed and established by the belief of this principle, which shall be the subject of the next chapter.

C H A P. VI.

The Arguments in the foregoing Part applied to the Christian Religion.

HAVING in the foregoing pages, endeavour-
ed to prove the necessity and usefulness of a
divine aid, as a principle of knowledge and action
in matters of religion, distinct from human reason,
it remains now to apply this doctrine to the Chri-
stian Religion, and to consider how far it may
reasonably be supposed to influence our minds to
the belief and practice of its doctrine and precepts.
In order to which, let it be considered, in the first
place, what it is reasonable to suppose a man in
the firm belief of such a principle has to do. It
is obvious to suppose, that a person in this belief,
if he acts consistent with it, will in all his religious
conduct, proceed upon a bottom of faith towards
God; that is, as by considering the perfect purity
of the Divine Being, he must be sensible, that
without holiness he cannot be acceptable to him,
and by taking a survey of the shortness and feeble-
ness of his own powers and faculties, that he is
not of himself capable to attain to that state, and
preserve himself in it; this leads him directly to
apply by faith for help where alone it is to be had,
that is, unto God, who is all-sufficient, and as
such, able to supply all defects of our understand-
ings, and regulate our wills and affections, and
all the powers and faculties of our minds, and
bring them into a conformity to his will, and pre-
serve them in it.

Now this is to be a Christian, for such an one
believes in a divine principle given of God, for
the ends proposed by the Christian Religion, or
by

by Christ the author of it, call it the *Grace of God*, the *Spirit of God*, the *Word of God*, the *Light of Christ*, or by any other name it matters not, provided its sufficiency for this great end be firmly believed: which principle was promised in the fullest and clearest terms to the believers in Christ, as an effect and consequence of his coming in the flesh; and was soon after his resurrection in an eminent manner given and dispensed to his disciples and followers, and continued with them, helping them to preach the gospel, and opening the understandings of those who were honestly disposed thereto, to receive and believe it, and influencing their hearts and affections to live according to its pure precepts; and this not only to the believers of that generation, but to be with them to all future generations, or in the words of Christ, *to abide with them for ever.*

To apply the reasonings in the former chapters more particularly to the Christian Religion, as it has been already proved from the pure nature of the Divine Being, that mankind, in order to his acceptance with him, should be holy, free from all defilement, &c. so the precepts of the Christian Religion require holiness in this extensive sense, as Mat. v. 48. *Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.* 1 Pet. i. 15, 16. *Again, As he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation,* Again, 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* Again, 1 Thess. v. 22, 23. *Abstain from all appearance of evil, and the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God, your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus.* These texts need no comment, but plainly imply, that God requires of Christians,
that

that they should be free from evil in every appearance and degree of it ; and they should be simply and altogether sincere, righteous, and holy, &c.

On the other hand, it has been proved, from the limited finite nature of our faculties as creatures, that we cannot certainly bring ourselves into this state, or preserve ourselves in it, without continual danger of falling, as in fact all mankind have fallen, and a great part of them do err from it daily, and therefore, there is need of the interposition of an infinite, unlimited power, for their help and preservation. Now both these the Christian Religion fully declares, *viz.* the weakness and impotency of man for this work, and the power and sufficiency of the grace or spirit of God, as a gift given him for this great end, to strengthen their weakness, and supply their defects of every kind.

As to the first, Christ himself expressly asserts it, John xv. 5. *Without me you can do nothing.* And the apostolick writers speak of it rather as a thing supposed and taken for granted, than to be proved, Rom. v. 6. *When we were yet without strength,* (says the apostle) *Christ died for the ungodly.* And elsewhere, speaking of the believers in their unconverted state, he expresses himself in terms which necessarily imply the greatest weakness or incapacity, as that they were dead in trespasses and sins, that they were once darkness; and in short, the whole design and œconomy of the Christian Religion is built upon this supposition, and it was for this end chiefly that Christ came, that he died and rose again, and gave the gift of his holy spirit, that he might thereby lay a firm foundation of faith in his power and all-sufficiency, for the destroying the works of the devil, for purifying and sanctifying

ing the hearts of men, which were defiled, which they were not able to do of themselves.

And that which gave the greatest confirmation to the truth of the whole, was that this help was not only promised and given, but also had its effectual work in those who received the truth of the gospel in the love of it; their hearts, upon receiving the spirit of Christ, became purified by faith; those who had been eminently wicked, as fornicators, idolaters, drunkards, extortioners, &c. became washed, sanctified, and justified, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of God. *We ourselves*, (says the apostle), *were sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures; but after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.* I might cite many more texts to the same effect, but having more particularly insisted on this part of the argument, in my first part, I shall forbear, only thus much I thought necessary, in order to shew, that the great design of the Christian Religion was to reform mankind by a divine principle given for that end; which, being received by faith, did that work fully and effectually; and that it was something distinct from the ordinary faculties of the mind, being said to be given to them, to be shed on them abundantly, and that to strengthen and improve our natural faculties, to enlighten the eyes of our understanding, and quicken and enliven our wills and affections; all which I have already proved to be agreeable to the finite limited nature of our faculties considered in themselves, and the absolute purity of the Divine Being, and the relation there is between

tween God as an all-wise, powerful Creator, and man as a feeble, fallible creature.

So that the Christian Religion, though in the manner of its publication and introduction into the world, it was uncommon and extraordinary; yet in the great end and design of it, and the means of attaining that end, it appears to be most reasonable, and agreeable to those notions which an intelligent rational creature must have of the blessed author of his being. And as to those extraordinary facts and circumstances, which preceded and attended the first publication of the gospel, such as the working of miracles, and especially that greatest of all, the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, and the effusion of the holy spirit which followed upon it; they were evidently directed to this end, *viz.* to be a foundation of faith in his power, who was the author of all, for the bringing about the necessary works of repentance, amendment of life, and perseverance in a state of holiness. And the apostles argued from these extraordinary acts of the divine power, by way of analogy, to the act of the same power, exerted for the bringing about these ends, particularly that of the resurrection of our Lord from the dead, as Rom. vi. ver. 1. to 11. and chap. viii. ver. 10, 11. and in his epistle to the Ephesians, from chap. i. ver. 13. to chap. ii. ver. 10. from all which, and many other passages of the like tendency he that reads the apostolick writings with attention, may observe, that the apostle argues by way of confirmation and encouragement, to the believers, that they should set about the work of sanctification, and renewing of the mind into a state of holiness, with a good assurance of success, because he that has called them unto this work, is all-powerful, and therefore able to assist them effectually in it, of which he has given the strongest assurance,

assurance, by raising up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead ; having also for the same end given them the gift of his holy spirit, as a principle immediately operating in their minds, to renew and sanctify them, which upon their receiving and believing in it, they also found to work powerfully and effectually for these good ends.

Thus the death and resurrection of Christ, as well as his holy unspotted life, and the miracles which he wrought, became a rational foundation of faith in his power, the power of his spirit ; and *vice versâ*, having found by experience, that by the power of his spirit they were renewed and sanctified in heart and spirit, or in the apostle's phrase, *Their old man was crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, and they were strengthened and enabled to walk in newness of life.* This gave them the strongest confirmation of the truth of all that our Lord did and suffered for them in his own person without them, and that he was in all respects such as he declared himself to be, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, inasmuch as he had fulfilled his promise, in giving them a new life through his spirit, a life of holiness and righteousness, who had been dead in sins and trespasses, by which they knew that he was true, in all that he had declared unto them, concerning the end and design of his coming, *viz. I am come that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly.*

Now as in all this, there was nothing but what is agreeable to the reason of things, and the relation there is between God and man as creator and creature, as hath been already proved, there is good reason to believe the truth of the whole ; and that, as it is reasonable to believe, that God who made man an intelligent creature, but yet of limited faculties, and as such, liable to errors and failures, is present with him to preserve him from
falling,

falling, and restore him when fallen, &c. so the Christian Religion, in the great end and design of it, proposing such help, and giving good assurances of it, by those extraordinary acts of the divine power, in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is reasonable to believe, that he came from God, and was what he declared himself to be.

And in this sense, Christianity may be said to be as old as the creation, inasmuch as ever since the creation, there was need of that help, and such help was given, or at least offered to mankind, and that therefore the gospel is a republication, not of the law, or religion of nature, but of the law of faith, which every man as a creature (that is, a limited, finite, dependent being), has reason to know, if he considers his own structure, and what a weak, feeble creature he is; and yet finds in himself at times, secret hungriings and thirstings after a state of holiness, and strong desires to be delivered from the power of these evil habits, to which he finds himself in bondage, which yet he cannot find himself able to effect. This leads him directly to apply for strength and ability to God, who alone is completely and absolutely good, and therefore may reasonably be supposed to give to men this sense, and these appetites; and almighty, and is therefore alone able to help him to fulfil them, and therefore, as I said, Christianity is in this sense, not only as old as the creation, but as extensive as human race, being founded on that immutable relation between God and man, as creator and creature, which is the same in all men, and in all ages. So that Christianity may truly be called a reasonable institution, as being founded on rational principles, as to the main end and design of it, which was the reformation of mankind. And though there are some parts of it, which men by their best reason, art, or contrivance

trivance, could never have invented, much less accomplished, and in that sense may be said to be above human reason, or any faculty merely human, yet there is nothing in any part of it rightly understood, contrary to reason.

For instance, it is not contrary to reason, that God should raise the dead; it is indeed contrary to reason, that one mortal man should raise another from the dead; and more so, that a dead person should restore himself to life: but that he that gave life should restore it, has nothing in it contrary to reason. And thus the apostle Paul in his defence before Agrippa, argues, *Why should it be thought incredible that God should raise the dead?* He does not say, *Why should it be thought incredible, that one man should raise another from the dead?* Or, *that the dead should raise themselves?* For that had been very incredible; but that God should do it is easy to conceive.

Again, it is not contrary to reason, that God should appoint a Saviour of mankind, and endue him with all powers and qualifications necessary for that work; that is, that he should be holy, harmless, and undefiled. For it would be a vain thing, for one to pretend to save others from sin, when himself was overcome by it; and that therefore he should be filled with the divine spirit and power without measure, and in that respect called the Son of God in the most eminent manner: and that, in order to the giving a sanction to his doctrines and precepts, he should be endued with the power of working miracles, which in their nature tend to give a sanction, and raise the attention of men to the doctrines and precepts delivered by him.

Again, it is not contrary to reason, that God should permit a person, thus dignified, to be by wicked hands taken and crucified; for being formed,

ed, as to his body, of the like materials with other men, and consequently mortal, it is indifferent whether such a person dies by a natural or violent death.

The latter, it is evident, has been in the course of providence the lot of many of the best of men, and in this case it was necessary, both in respect of the great end and design of his becoming a sacrifice for the sins of mankind, and also to make the evidence of his resurrection the more certain and uncontestible, which the beloved disciple John points at, after having told us, John xix. 34. *That one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water, and he that saw it bear record, and his record is true, and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.* Which is in effect to say (in order to obviate an objection against his resurrection, that perhaps he was not really dead, and therefore his resurrection might be a fiction or contrivance) I know that he was really dead, because I saw his crucifixion, and not only so, but the violence used upon his body even after death was such, that had it been living, would have destroyed life; and this I myself saw. For that it was himself that the apostle meant in saying, *He that saw it bear record, &c.* is plain from what he farther asserted, chap. xxi. ver. 24. *This is the disciple that testifieth of these things, and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.*

Again, it is not contrary to reason, that a person sent into the world, for the purpose of men's salvation, should after being crucified, dead, and buried, be raised again from the dead; this is so far from being contrary to reason, that it is most reasonable. For as the principal end of Christ's coming was to reveal to mankind a power, by which they might overcome their corruptions, and

their hearts become purified and sanctified; what could more effectually conduce to that end, than so convincing an evidence of the divine power attending him, *viz. God having raised him from the dead?* The Holy Ghost being thereupon given as a principle, immediately acting upon the mind for these good purposes, there could be nothing wanting to a full confirmation of the truth of the whole; considering moreover, that the greatest good, and true happiness of mankind, was plainly and only designed in the Christian dispensation; and therefore, though the manner of its publication and introduction into the world had something uncommon and extraordinary, yet the thing proposed by it, which was the reformation of mankind, and the means of attaining it, by a divine principle given of God for that end, had nothing in it but what was accountable from reason, as hath been made appear in the foregoing pages. Only such a principle was the more likely to take place, when revealed and published to the world, by a person in so extraordinary a manner qualified and dignified, as our Lord was. For though a doctrine agreeable to reason in itself, as such, does often make its own way with wise men, duly attending to it, yet when accompanied with such extraordinary circumstances, as the Christian doctrine was at its first publication, it quickens and raises the attention of all, and makes men apply themselves more diligently to the enquiry, whether these things are so as they are declared to be: so that Christianity is not only in itself good and profitable to mankind, but the wisdom of God eminently appears in the manner of its publication to the world. For if the same pure doctrines and rational precepts had been only preached or published to the world, without any solemnity or circumstance extraordinary attending the publication,

tion, they might perhaps have been received by some few for a time, for their own sake, and then dwindled into general neglect or oblivion: but when the author of the Christian Religion had such undoubted evidences of his divine mission, as hath been already mentioned, this in the nature of the thing, bespoke the greatest regard to them, as not only being in themselves good, but as coming directly from God; especially when it appeared, that the first publishers of them were so influenced by them, that of sinners they became saints, and those, who received the gospel, did, by the power and virtue thereof, bring forth fruits agreeable.

Had the Christian Religion proposed any doctrines or precepts, to gratify ambition, or avarice, or lust, or any other vicious appetites in its adherents, and had the first Christians appeared to be persons pursuing things which had such a tendency, there might have been some reason to suspect some wicked contrivance in it, and that it was a plot against mankind, to enslave them to these passions: but as nothing but their happiness, both in this world and the next, evidently appears to be aimed at therein, (I speak now of the Christian Religion in its original constitution, and the only right means proposed for the attaining of it) which is faith in God, for the help of his grace and good spirit, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (contrary to the evils last mentioned) and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world, which has been proved to be a rational principle, there is the strongest reason to receive and believe the Christian doctrine, with all humility and thankfulness, as the greatest blessing mankind were ever favoured with, and to apply ourselves with all diligence by faith, in

the sufficiency of this divine principle, to live agreeable thereunto.

C H A P. VII.

The foregoing Doctrine considered with regard to some late Controversies, particularly, that relating to Reason and Revelation.

I Shall now consider this doctrine of a divine principle, with respect to some late disputes or controversies, which I think, (with due regard to the labours of some learned men) are more easily terminated upon this principle than any other; as first in that question, Whether reason is a sufficient guide in matters of religion, or whether revelation is necessary to help the weakness, and supply the defects of reason?

To give a clear solution of this important question, it is necessary, that the terms of it should be first explained and understood; for as both reason and revelation are taken in different senses, so whenever we speak of them, we ought to declare in what sense we intend them in the present case. Thus by reason is sometimes, and that most generally, understood the faculty of reason, or that power which a man hath as a rational creature, of himself, to apprehend, judge, and compare the ideas of things presented to the view of his mind: and sometimes it is taken for the result of that apprehension and judgment, or the conclusion which the mind forms, by the use of that faculty, expressed either in word or writing. In the first sense, it may be called the power of reasoning, and in the latter, the act of it.

Again, by revelation is sometimes understood, the immediate presentation of something to the mind

mind of man relating to the will of God, and his duty accordingly, and fixing the mind in its attention thereunto, in the right believing and practising of which, his present and future happiness consists, which may be termed inward and immediate revelation; and this I take to be the most proper sense of the word, and what is generally meant by it, when used in the holy scriptures of the New Testament, (for I do not at present meddle with the several ways of revelation mentioned in the Old Testament); but there is another meaning of it, which has very much obtained of late, which is *the declaration of the mind of God committed to writing, and contained in the holy scriptures*. This is what is generally meant by the word revelation, by the writers of both sides of the question, though improperly, for I do not remember any where in the scriptures, to find the word used in that sense; on the contrary, the spirit of God, which is the divine principle I have been contending for, is called the *spirit of wisdom and revelation*; the eyes of the understanding being thereby enlightened, which must be revelation in the first sense of the word. However, as it has been of late, and that most generally, used in the latter sense, I shall sometimes use it in that sense; but having distinguished both reason and revelation into two senses, or meanings of those words, that I may be the more clearly understood, when I use either of these terms, I shall distinguish every where in which of these two senses I use them.

I say then, that reason, in the first sense of the word, is not a sufficient guide in matters of religion; for as a faculty it is but a mere power, acting nothing, and therefore can be a guide in nothing, much less in so weighty an affair as that of religion. The question then will recur, Whe-

ther reason (as mankind are endued with it, and which distinguishes them from brutes) employed or exercised about matters of religion, or divine things, is of itself a sufficient guide in these matters, without any other help or assistance? I think not: I have before proved that reason, in this sense, is a limited, finite principle, and as such, liable to err in matters of knowledge, and fail in matters of practice. But any principle of knowledge and action, which is in itself liable to errors and failure, is not a sufficient guide in matters of religion; for that which instructs in these matters ought to do it with certainty; and that which assists the mind in practice ought to do it effectually, and in such a manner as certainly to be depended upon: but this cannot be truly said of human reason, or any faculty merely human or creaturely. And therefore, these faculties have need of some help, something to steer their uncertain course, to fix their roving, to strengthen their weakness, to reduce them to a certainty and stability, and that not only by presenting right objects, but by assisting the understanding to receive them, staying the mind in its attention upon them, in order to reduce them to action.

Now nothing can do this but God; he that made the understanding, and formed the other faculties of the mind, can only preserve them in their due exercise, and restore them to it when they have erred, and for this end he has given a manifestation of his spirit to every man to profit withal, which is what I called revelation in the first sense of the word, that is, *inward, immediate revelation*, which by our late writers is called *inspiration*.

Now, the controversy between reason and revelation in this sense of the word, is brought into a narrow compass. For as upon these principles reason without revelation is not a sufficient instructor

tor in matters of religion, so upon the same principles, revelation, though distinct from human reason, yet does not act without it, or separate from it, but acts upon it, by informing the understanding, and assisting the other faculties of the mind; so that neither reason without revelation, in this sense, nor revelation without reason, but both together, the one heightened and improved by the other, make up the one certain foundation of knowledge and action in matters of religion; for as God informs the understanding, so he also acts upon the will and affections, by inclining and moving them to objects according to his will, and strengthening them with power and resolution to withstand all temptations to the contrary.

Which, as it hath been proved to be agreeable to the reason of things, so it is perfectly agreeable to the account we have of these things in scripture, where 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, is said to shine into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of his Son Jesus Christ.* Again, 1 John v. 20. *We know that the Son of God is come, and he hath given us an understanding.* Again, as before cited, *The eyes of our understanding are said to be enlightened by the spirit of wisdom and revelation.* And with respect to the other faculties of the mind, it is said, Phil. ii. 13. *to be God that worketh in us, both to will and to do of his own pleasure,* which comprehends all that can be called a principle of knowledge and action.

In all which, and many other passages that might be mentioned, the declaration of the Holy Ghost in the scriptures, and the reason and nature of things speak the same language. And this is also acknowledged by that great pretended ad-

vocate for reason, the author before cited (besides the passages already cited from him) Christianity as old, &c. p. 199. where after having quoted Bishop Taylor in these words: "And if
 " the Holy Ghost, as Bishop Taylor says, works
 " by heightening and improving our natural faculties, he proceeds, it can only be by using
 " such means as will improve them, in proposing
 " reasons and arguments to convince our understandings, which can only be improved by studying the nature and reason of things: *I applied my heart*, says the wisest of men, *to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things*: so that the Holy Ghost
 " cannot deal with men as rational creatures, but
 " by proposing arguments to convince their understandings, and influence their wills, in the
 " same manner as if proposed by other agents." Upon which I would observe, first, that according unto him, the Holy Ghost influences both the understanding and will, and is therefore a principle of knowledge and action distinct from both (in direct contradiction to what he has elsewhere expressly declared) but this it does, it seems, by proposing arguments to convince the one, and influencing the other; but this is not all it does, for besides this, in the words of Bishop Taylor, *it heightens and improves our natural faculties*, by enlarging the understanding to apprehend, and strengthening the will with resolution and power to pursue, such objects as it presents to it, which the apostle calls, *being strengthened with might by his spirit in the inward man*; and without this improvement of the understanding, and strengthening the will, our reason, as a human faculty of itself, could not certainly apprehend, nor the will pursue to action, that which the holy spirit proposes to it; so that the holy spirit improving our
 reason,

reason, or reason as assisted by it, is the only principle of certainty in understanding, and ability in practice.

To return therefore to the case of reason and revelation, there is as real difference between the one and the other, as between vision and illumination, we cannot see (though we may have a capacity of seeing) without light; and on the other hand, light is of no use where a capacity of seeing is wanting. But revelation, inward immediate revelation, not only gives light, and presents objects, or in the words of the last mentioned author, proposes arguments to it, but also opens the eyes of the understanding, to see and perceive them, heightens and improves it, which none but God that made the understanding can do: and that he does this, as well as that he proposes objects, or reasons, or arguments, is acknowledged by the adversaries of revelation, and it cannot in the nature of things be otherwise, as what God proposes may be, and sometimes no doubt is, above the capacities of men to perceive; so it is most reasonable to suppose, that he gives at the same time an understanding, or enlarges their understanding, to perceive that which otherwise would be above their capacities as men to understand; which being the case upon the foregoing principles, it can be no longer a doubt which is the more preferable as a guide or instructor in matters of religion, reason or revelation in this sense of the word; for though they both bear a part in it, and go together, yet inasmuch as human reason receives its certainty from revelation, revelation is in itself the more certain, according to that maxim in the schools, *Propter quod unumquodque est tale, illud ipsum est magis tale.*

It now remains to consider the case of revelation in the last sense of the word, that is, *written revelation.*

revelation. It is plain, that this cannot be at all compared with reason as a faculty of the mind, yet may be truly said to be an object of that faculty. But any propositions, written or not written, offered to the mind to be believed or practised, cannot properly be said to be a guide or help, or matter of instruction to the mind, otherwise than as the mind understands them. The question then will return, By what faculty shall the mind judge, whether an external revelation proposed to it, be fit to be received as such? Shall the reason of man, unassisted by the inspiration of God, be a judge in this case? I think not. What then? As every thing that bears the name of revealed religion is declared to be spoken or written by the holy spirit of God, so the spirit of God must necessarily assist the mind or spirit of man; for the understanding whether what is said to be so written, or spoken, be really what it is pretended to be, and also how best to apply the truths thus conveyed to the ends for which they are designed.

It is supposed on all hands, that God does reveal truths to the minds of men; and it must be also supposed, that when he does this, it is in a way which the person to whom this revelation is made must understand, and as these truths so revealed sometimes relate only to himself, and sometimes to others, to whom therefore they are to be conveyed by word or writing; when this last becomes the case, how shall he who hears or reads this revelation, know that it comes from God?

Answer. By the same means whereby he knows that a revelation immediately made to his own mind, comes from him, that is, as the spirit of God evidences itself to the mind, both by the nature, end, and design of the truths revealed, and the manner of their being revealed; that is, by that life and virtue which accompany them,

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So a revelation, externally conveyed by word or writing, is evidenced to the mind of him that receives it the same way, that is, by the nature, end, and design of the things revealed, and by the same spirit influencing the mind of him that hears or reads it, in order to his believing and receiving of it.

Now, the nature, end, and design of the Christian revelation, contained in the writings of the New Testament, is such, that it plainly declares itself to come from God. For that may justly be esteemed to come from God, which is most worthy to come from him; and that is most worthy to come from him, which tends to the reforming and perfecting human nature, by bringing of it back to that state of purity and perfection, in which man as a creature of God, bearing his image, was at first formed, and this is evidently the great design of Christianity, as well as that it promises forgiveness of sins that are past, upon men's complying with the terms, *viz. Submitting themselves to the work of repentance, and amendment of life, and perseverance in a state of holiness.* Now this is all that mankind want, in order to their being happy, and this the Christian Religion proposes for them; so that it is in its nature, end, and design, a most perfect institution. For what can be added to that, whose precepts require inward truth and sincerity, perfect love to God and man, and that men should be holy in body, soul, and spirit, as he that hath called them is holy, as hath been before observed.

But yet, if Christianity, as perfect as it is in the purity of its precepts, consisted only in written rules or doctrines, it would not after all answer its end fully, because the depravity of human nature, both in understanding and practice, is such, and the prevalency of vicious habits so strong, that without some help inwardly and immediately conveyed

veyed to the mind, to open the understanding, and influence the will and affections, the best precepts will not effectually prevail for the ends proposed by them. And therefore, to render Christianity most complete, there was, besides the excellency of its precepts, the help of the holy spirit of God given for that purpose ; such an help I have before proved to be absolutely necessary, from the consideration of our weak, finite, limited faculties, and the absolute purity of the Divine Being, &c.

And that it was given in the first publication of the gospel, I have also proved at large in my former part, where it is plain, from the account delivered of it, that upon the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Ghost was given, by which repentance was wrought, and the heart purified ; and in particular, *that God opened the heart of some, that they attended to the things which were spoken by the apostles ;* and on the other hand, *that the word preached did not profit others, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.* That is, they attended to it as men only, not believing in that spirit, by which the first ministers of the word preached, which would have opened their hearts ; they did not receive it as it really was the word of God, but as the word of men : and as it is God alone that teaches and helps people to profit, they not believing this were not profited by it.

And the case was the same with respect to the scriptures : some that were unlearned and unstable, not stedfast in their faith in God, but leaning to their own understandings, wrested them to their destruction, not considering, that no prophecy, or doctrine, or exhortation, (for the reason is the same) of scripture, as of any private interpretation, 2 Pet. i. 20. By which we must understand, and the original might have been translated) *of a man's*

man's own interpretation as a man; for if we understand private as distinguished from publick interpretation, it leads directly to popery. But as holy men of God spake and writ as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, so there is need of the help of the same Holy Ghost, to understand and apply to our profit and edification what was so written or spoken: for, from a parity of reason, who so fit to interpret the words of the Holy Ghost, as the Holy Ghost? And if this was the case then, is it not so now? Is it not now as necessary, that we should receive the help of the holy spirit, for the right understanding and use of the holy scriptures, as in primitive times? I think much more so.

Now, that the simplicity of the truth is so much perverted, and the scriptures wrested by each of the many parties and sects of Christians, to make them speak agreeable to their several systems, and the original text possibly having suffered by so many transcripts and translations, which are generally warped and twisted to the minds of the transcribers and translators, and their party. Now, nothing can preserve the sincere Christians from being influenced by these, to the perverting his judgment or practice, but the light of the same spirit, which was the author of them, giving a right discovery, what the true mind of the Holy Ghost, expressed in the scriptures is, as well as giving strength to cast off the prejudices of education, and the influence of example and authority, and take up and hold fast the profession of the Christian faith and doctrine, in the purity and simplicity of it, as well as to live agreeable to its rules and precepts.

From all which it is plain, that as the spirit of God, is that which helps and enlightens the mind for the right use and understanding of the scriptures, or written revelation; so it is that which

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is the principal ground of certainty : not the scriptures themselves, unless we should suppose, which cannot be supposed, that every thing therein written for our belief and practice consisted of self-evident propositions, which at first view beget an assent : not human reason of itself, unassisted by the inspiration of the spirit of God ; for this, as hath been already observed, being a limited, fallible principle, cannot by any rule or measure of its invention or contrivance, comprehend the purpose of the Almighty, but men will be in danger either of mistaking the true meaning and design of an author divinely inspired, or adding thereto something of their own, or diminishing from it. Our measures are likely to be too long or too short, or not rightly applied, when we take upon us, without him, to judge of divine things ; and this is not only reasonable, and what may be expected, but it is notoriously evident, that men, judging of divine matters this way, have been mistaken in every of these respects.

For instance, first in matters of belief barely, which are purely speculative, and as such, the objects of the understanding. Is it not evident to any common observer of things, how men have added to the plain meaning and design of the Holy Ghost, in the scriptures, by contriving, and imposing creeds and articles of faith, which, from the first introduction of them into the Christian church, became such a bone of contention, that Christian charity (the badge of discipleship, and that wherein the perfection of all religion consists) was lost and destroyed, by the unnatural feuds and animosities, which so pestered the Christian church after the council of Nice, for several centuries, bishops excommunicating and deposing one another, and the deposed again excommunicating and deposing his adversaries, whenever the emperor

peror became of this or that party ; till at last an effectual end was put to the controversy, and in a great measure to Christianity itself, in those eastern parts, by the prevailing of Mahometanism, as the learned Dr. Prideaux, in his preface to the life of Mahomet, has observed ; though I must take the liberty to dissent from him in this respect, *viz.* that it was not the different sentiments of Christians in those days, or at any other time, that was so prejudicial and destructive to the Christian Religion, as the uncharitable vindictive way of managing the controversies about them, and the same has opened way for the present attempts against the Christian name (but not to digress).

If we go into the western parts of Christendom, we shall find the controversy in a great measure terminated after a time, by another remedy worse than the disease, *viz.* the growing power of the bishop of Rome, by which means, the several parts of the popish trumpery were gradually, by his authority brought into, and established in the church, a religion bearing the name of Christian, but a composition of heathenish rights and Jewish ceremonies ; and many of its doctrines, contradictory not only to reason, but to common sense, and all this imposed upon mankind, not by persuasion, but by violence and authority, to the enslaving their understandings, and subjecting their estates, and endangering their lives or liberties, all contrary to the very nature of Christianity. Add to this, that after this religion, (if it may bear that name) had in a great measure taken place, that monstrous birth, *the divinity of the school-men*, was brought forth, a mixture of heathen philosophy, and something bearing the name of *Christian doctrine*, which, it seems, could not be rightly taught and explained, without the assistance

sistance of Aristotle and his commentators ; which at this day prevails too much among some, the ancient and modern philosophy being brought in for assistants, in opposition to each other, in the late disputes about several parts of the Christian doctrine. Now in all this, human reason has over-done it, has stretched its measure too far, meddled with things out of its sphere, made a plain, easy institution difficult, by going about to explain it.

On the other hand, if we consider the practical part of Christianity, which is the principal thing designed by the blessed author of it ; this, amidst all the virulent controversies about matters of speculation, is little regarded. But whilst men are earnestly (as they would have it thought) contending for the faith of the gospel (for such, every one accounts his particular set of doctrines or opinions) they either neglect, or represent as impossible, the pure precepts of it, treating them as matters of mere speculation, very good in themselves, but never intended, or even possible to be reduced to practice, in that extent, in which our Lord and his apostles delivered them ; which is, in effect, under a pretence of contending for the faith, destroying it, as to its only salutary end and design, which was *to purify the heart, to work by love, to give victory over the world, and the corruptions of it, and in short, by the power of it, to bring into, and preserve in a conversation agreeable to the pure and perfect precepts of the gospel.*

Now, a man may read all the creeds that have ever been published to the world, and be a considerable proficient in the subtilties and distinctions of scholastick divinity, and all the controversies now, or formerly subsisting, relating to matters of religion, and make not one step in improvement respecting that which is the real work of faith ; he
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may indeed improve in pride and conceit, and despise others who are more ignorant (as he supposes) than himself, (and it is well for them they are so) and in this conceit may fancy himself a believer, and apply to himself all the privileges belonging to such; whereas, he that sincerely believes that Christ died, or was delivered for our sins, and raised again for our justification, and in that faith, humbly applies unto God for forgiveness of sins that are past, and for power to overcome them in the remaining part of his life; though he may be ignorant of all the controversies, which have no relation to this great work (and such are the greatest part of them), this man is certainly in the way to receive all the benefits of Christ's coming in the flesh, and the end of all that our Lord did and suffered for mankind is effectually answered as to such an one.

But it may be asked, Must we make no profession of our faith, in any system or form of words?

Answ. That which the apostles of our Lord thought sufficient, ought not to be esteemed too short by us; now the apostle Paul tells us expressly, *That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* However, if I may take the liberty to speak my own sentiments of the several creeds now extant, of which I have seen a great number, I would chuse to express my belief in the words of that called the *apostles creed*, before any other of them, the terms of it being most simple and unexceptionable, and as such, administering least occasion of controversy.

But to return to the main matter. By this time, I hope, the sincere honest-minded reader may be sensible, that human reason is not a proper interpreter of scripture, or written revelation, not only as being in itself a limited, fallible principle, but

that in fact, it has erred both in matters of speculation and practice; by overdoing it, straining the string too far on the one; and underdoing it, leaving things too loose on the other; and consequently misapplying the great end and design of Christianity, making of it more a speculative than practical institution, the contrary to which is most certain, the principal design of it being to reform mankind in practice.

And as to matters which only relate to the understanding, and terminate there, as there are (and it cannot be otherwise) different capacities naturally, and different degrees and growths of knowledge and experience in religion, so we are required to believe only according to that capacity, and our present degrees of knowledge and experience and whenever it becomes necessary for us to make any advances in knowledge, in due time God will give it us, he will reveal it unto us; and in the mean time, we ought not to judge or despise, much less persecute one another, for not believing or professing to believe what we do not understand; but the strong bearing the infirmities of the weak, and in meekness instructing them; and the weak in modesty and sobriety attending to instruction, and waiting for farther enlargement of understanding; and both studious principally to live and act according to their present growths and attainments, which, without doubt, is all that God requires of them; and this temper of mind the spirit of God leads unto, that is, as he is all-wise, and knows our wants, what is necessary for us and our capacities, what we are able to bear, so he administers suitably, milk for babes, and stronger meat for those of full age, who, by reason of long use, have their understandings exercised, and enlarged to discern more perfectly good and evil.

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To sum up the argument on this head: whether by revelation, we understand inward and immediate, or outward, written revelation: God speaks both these ways to mankind, as unto rational intelligent creatures, and the exercise of their understandings, and other faculties is not thereby suspended or impeded, but improved. And the divine principle acts upon them in conjunction with them; yet as the latter not only receives light, but sight, and all its certainty of knowledge and power of action from the former, it is most reasonable, that the divine principle should in all things have the pre-eminence, which is so evidently the truth of the case, that (besides the reasonableness of it, which has been already proved) the contrary is a very great absurdity, and unworthy the dignity of the Divine Being, supposing that he concerns himself at all with our minds, by communicating any thing to them, (which it is on all hands supposed he does) that he should subject his revelations, or that they should be subjected to man's judgment, as unto a more certain rule or criterion, the greater to the less, the infinitely wise fountain of all knowledge, to our scanty, limited reason, fallible as it may be. It is therefore on all accounts reasonable to conclude, that God, who made man a reasonable creature, is always present with him, teaching and instructing him in all things necessary to his present and future happiness, and this sometimes inwardly and immediately, and sometimes by the means of former revelations, (which are then only profitable to us, when brought to our remembrance, and opened and applied to the present state of the mind and circumstance we are under, by the same divine principle from whence they at first proceeded). And also preparing, opening, and improving the understanding to receive and

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believe,

believe, and quickening and strengthening all the other faculties of the mind to live, move, and act accordingly, which none other can do, but he that formed the mind, and gave it all those excellent powers and faculties with which it is endued.

There is another difficulty which some writers lay a great stress on, and yet I think, upon the principles before established, is easily reconciled, which is this: The writers on the side of reason, which they would have to be a sufficient guide in matters of religion, without revelation, represent their opponents as charging the Divine Being with injustice and partiality, for communicating the knowledge of his will by revelation, (by which they mean external written revelation) to a very small part of mankind, and with-holding it from the rest, so that the far greatest part of men, not only before the coming of Christ, but since, are destitute of the only means of knowing the will of God, and doing it, and consequently of being happy. Now this I think is easily and effectually reconciled upon the foregoing principles; for if there be, (as has been proved), an inward, as well as outward revelation, and the first from the nature of things, and the state of mankind considered as creatures liable to errors and failures, must be universal, all mankind are partakers of it: where then is the partiality? seeing God hath given mankind universally the knowledge of his will, by a principle discovering it to them in their own breasts, they are all, without exception, so far objects of his kind notice and favour; but men not duly attending to this inward monitor, (though a sufficient guide to them if they regard it, in which respect all are without excuse) it pleased him to make known his will, and their duty accordingly, to some part of mankind, in a more clear and explicit manner, than to the rest, moving

ing and disposing them to publish the same by word or writing.

Now is it partiality in God, that all are not prophets, or apostles, or teachers, or publishers of revelation? If this were the case, where would be the learners, the hearers, the instructed? It might as well be alledged as partiality in Divine Providence, that he has not formed all men in an equal degree of wisdom and prudence, every one as much an orator, statesman, or philosopher, as Cicero, Plutarch, Seneca, Plato, &c. Again, where is the partiality, that some part of mankind are favoured with the writings of the inspired penmen, Moses and the prophets in the Old, and the evangelists and apostles of Christ in the New Testament, which others have not, seeing the residue of mankind are not upon these principles left to themselves, without sufficient light and instruction to know their duty, and help to practise it, if they duly attend thereto; and it is most reasonable to suppose, that God requires no more of any man, either to believe or practise, than in proportion to what understanding and strength he is pleased to give him, and so much as that, is no doubt his indispensable duty.

To whom much is given, of them much is required, and these are capable of serving their fellow-creatures in a greater degree, and if they do so, from the reason of things, we may justly conclude, the greater will be their reward; and on the other hand, *to whom little is given, little from them is required;* but if they live up to that little, no doubt but they are accepted with God, who is just and equal in all his ways, and consequently does not require more of his creatures, than he gives them understanding and power to know and practise, which takes in all mankind, however ignorant or barbarous, or remote, if they sincerely walk up

to that degree of knowledge and understanding of their duty, which at times and seasons is discovered to them in their own breasts.

Though it must at the same time be acknowledged with humble thankfulness, that the advantage we are partakers of is very great, who have the benefit of the holy scriptures, and therein an express declaration of the will of God, that he will forgive us our sins for Jesus Christ's sake, upon our sincere and unfeigned repentance and amendment of life; for which end, he also gives us the help of his grace and good spirit. But this advantage or preference is not partiality, unless it appeared, that all the rest of mankind were left wholly to themselves, destitute of all means of knowledge and assistance respecting their duty to God, and acceptance with him; any more than it can be said to be partial in the Divine Being, in that he has not made all intelligent beings angels, or all men alike of consummate wisdom and perfection: but as he has made the several classes of creatures in subordination to each other, from man down to the smallest insect, and his wisdom therein does evidently appear; so he has made the several individuals of the same species, (mankind as well as others) some more perfect in their kind than others, and communicated some special instances of his care and providence to some more than others, whose duty is thereby enlarged, and all this without partiality, seeing his care and providence is over all universally, according to that state of being, and degree of perfection in which they are placed.

In all which, the justice and goodness of God, and the reasonableness of his proceedings with mankind, as to a future judgment, and rewards and punishments, is easily accounted for, (seeing he requires of them an obedience in practice,
agreeable

agreeable to that understanding and means of knowledge he gives them, and no more) and the free exercise and right use of our rational faculties, not only secured, but improved: inasmuch as it is supposed, that the divine principle (though it is sufficient when duly attended unto, and believed in, to help us to overcome sin completely, and to live agreeable to the will of God, yet) does not operate by way of compulsion, but persuasion, which it is in our power to attend unto, and concur with, or the contrary, to chuse or refuse what it proposes to us, and therefore, in the equity and reason of things, we become accountable to God that has given us these faculties, and this assistance, for our using or not using them to his glory and our own happiness: so that all the purposes of religion and morality being most effectually secured this way, what hinders our embracing it with all humility and thankfulness, especially considering that the blessed author of the Christian Religion was himself a perfect example, by virtue of this divine principle which dwelt in him without measure, (for God gave not the spirit by measure to him) of those holy precepts delivered by him both in doing and suffering.

I have not made use of any authorities ancient or modern, to confirm the truth of what has been advanced in this treatise, chusing rather that the doctrine should support itself by its own reasonableness; though, on the other hand, I would not be thought to despise the judgment of those who have sincerely laboured for promoting the cause of Christianity, among whom the late learned and judicious Archbishop Tillotson was deservedly esteemed eminent; and because the author of *Christianity as old as*, &c. has several times quoted him, and some others under the denomination of rational divines, I think it not besides

the purpose, to let him and my readers see what this great man's judgment was on the point I have been contending for, which surely must be a good argument, *ad hominem*, with the last mentioned author, as well as have some weight with my readers in general. In the second volume of his sermons, p. 303. Sermon 146. he has these words:

“ But after all this is done for us, we are still
 “ without strength, our nature being depraved
 “ and sunk into that impotency and weakness,
 “ that without the powerful assistance of divine
 “ grace, we are utterly unable to perform those
 “ most equal and reasonable conditions which
 “ the gospel requires of us, being, as the scrip-
 “ ture expresses it, *dead in trespasses and sins, and*
 “ *estranged from the life of God through the dark-*
 “ *ness that is in us, and the blindness of our hearts.*
 “ Being enslaved to vicious habits, and having a
 “ carnal mind, which is enmity to God, and ren-
 “ ders us incapable to receive or relish divine and
 “ spiritual things: so that notwithstanding all that
 “ our blessed Saviour hath done and suffered for
 “ us, and all the merciful overtures of pardon and
 “ happiness which the gospel makes to us, all
 “ this will signify nothing to our benefit and ad-
 “ vantage, unless our impotency be relieved, and
 “ new life and strength be conveyed to us, to
 “ awaken and excite us to that which is good, to
 “ enable us to mortify and subdue our evil and
 “ corrupt inclinations, to break off our vicious
 “ habits, and to walk in the ways of God's com-
 “ mandments; for we are not sufficient of our-
 “ selves, as of ourselves, for any of these things,
 “ but our sufficiency is of God: without Christ we
 “ can do nothing, and it is only through him
 “ strengthening of us, that we are able to do all
 “ these things, which are necessary to be done by
 “ us, in order to the obtaining that happiness and
 “ salvation

“ salvation which the gospel has promised, and
 “ our Saviour hath purchased for us. And there-
 “ fore our merciful Redeemer, that he might not
 “ leave his work imperfect, hath sent his blessed
 “ spirit into our hearts, to enlighten the eyes of
 “ our minds, and to open and dispose our un-
 “ derstandings, for to receive of divine and spi-
 “ ritual truths, to conquer likewise the perverseness
 “ and stubbornness of our wills, and to set
 “ us at liberty from the slavery of our lusts, (*for*
 “ *where the spirit of God is, as St. Paul tells us,*
 “ *there is liberty*) to renew our natures, and to
 “ purify our hearts, to mortify our corrupt af-
 “ fections, and to assist us to every good word
 “ and work, to strengthen us against temptations,
 “ to support us under sufferings and persecutions,
 “ and, in a word, to keep us by the mighty power
 “ of God, and gracious assistance of his holy spi-
 “ rit, through faith unto salvation.”

All which is a clear and full of testimony to the
 necessity and sufficiency of a divine principle, for
 the producing a virtuous religious course of life,
 drawn from the consideration of the darkness and
 blindness of our understandings, and the impo-
 tency and weakness of our wills, and the strength
 and prevalency of evil habits, &c. and that with-
 out such a principle, notwithstanding the great
 and good things which our Lord Jesus Christ has
 done and suffered for us in his own person, for
 remission of sins that are past, the work would be
 imperfect, and we should be utterly incapable to
 obtain that happiness which the gospel has pro-
 mised, and our Saviour has purchased for us. All
 perfectly agreeable to the doctrine and way of
 reasoning laid down in this treatise.

The CONCLUSION.

HAVING now finished what lay before me on this necessary subject, so far as concerns unbelievers, or such as any ways question the truth of Christianity ; I shall conclude with an address to the professors of it, first to those who deny or question the necessity, power, and sufficiency of a divine principle, for the purposes so often mentioned.

It has been often matter of admiration to me, that there should be any who profess the holy scriptures to be their rule, and yet do not believe in such a principle, when nothing is more clearly and fully recommended throughout the whole scriptures of both Testaments, but especially the New. It is plain to any who read the sacred writings with attention, that the spirit, virtue, and efficacy of every dispensation consisted in this principle, as might easily appear by enumeration of particulars, with which I shall not at present detain the reader. But with respect to the gospel dispensation, to go about to prove it, would be as lighting a candle to the sun at noon ; it being evidently that in which all the benefits of the gospel center, and without which all is in vain, as to answering the great end for which it was designed, which was *the complete salvation of men*, as well from the power and dominion of sin, as from the guilt and punishment due to it : this appears throughout the whole Christian system, and the reason of the thing being the same in all future ages, as well as at the primitive times, it must be concluded to be designed and given as a standing permanent help for the same good ends to all generations, according to the promise of Christ, *that*
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it should abide with them, his disciples and followers, *for ever*. And to deprive the Christian Religion of this, is to take from it that which alone renders it effectual for the great purposes of religion, which is a reformation of life, by renewing the mind into a state of holiness and true righteousness, and preserving it therein; and leaves Christianity a beautiful picture indeed, a resemblance of very good things, a set of excellent doctrines and precepts, but lifeless, without power, virtue, and efficacy, for the putting them in practice.

And therefore I would recommend it to the most serious consideration of Christians of this generation, that as it was by the power and virtue of this principle, that the primitive Christians were what they were: a people inwardly reformed in heart and spirit, washed, sanctified, and justified: so it is by departing from this, that the Christian Religion is sunk into that contempt in which it has fallen among many at this day, and opened a door for the present opposition to it.

And for that plausible pretence of setting up reason in opposition to divine revelation, (though I would not say this is the case with all who argue on that side of the question, yet) it is evident, that many of them intend nothing else by it, but to follow their own hearts lusts, for which they will undertake to render reasons such as they are. That this is really the case, appears from hence, because it is notorious, that the most vicious and profligate (at least those of them who give themselves the trouble to think at all of religion) generally fall in with these notions, and are become great advocates for reason in matters of religion, when at the same time the general conduct of many of them is so contrary to reason, that it is be-
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low the actions even of brute animals; so that their design is plainly this, under that plausible pretence, to live and act as they list; they oppose Christianity because of the purity of its doctrines, and they reject this divine inward principle, because it reproves them in secret, and in the midst of their vicious courses, it meets them sometimes in a narrow place, so that they cannot fly from it, or escape its notice; and therefore as it gives them trouble, by setting their sins in order before them, they are resolved to seek excuses and subterfuges in order for a time to quiet themselves, if possible, by consulting (what they account) their reason, and by that means strengthen themselves in evil doing. Whereas, did men but turn at the reproofs of this divine principle, and believing in the sufficiency of it, did follow and obey its plain discoveries, though it would lead them at first in a cross to their vicious inclinations, as it cannot be otherwise, yet by degrees, as they continue to believe and obey it, the cross, which at first attended them in their pursuit of virtue this way, will not only become tolerable, but easy and acceptable, and to those, who are long accustomed to it, exceeding pleasant and delightful.

Lastly, To you my brethren, professors of the same faith with me, witnesses and partakers of the heavenly calling, through the divine principle of grace and truth, which is come by Jesus Christ, I beseech you, hold fast the profession of this your faith without wavering. Watch against every thing in yourselves and one another, that tends to destroy or any wise weaken this faith, let it arise from ever so specious pretences or insinuations, and in order to it, call to remembrance what it was that first gathered us to be a people, and preserved our forefathers and elder brethren, through a great fight of afflictions, and strong opposition from

from the secular powers: was it not this? That they, having witnessed the work of sanctification through the spirit of Christ, became so strengthened and encouraged thereby, that nothing could move them from their steadfastness, and therefore in the strength of this faith, they held fast the profession of it, continuing to assemble themselves to wait upon God, for the renewing of their strength, and worshipping of him according to his will, when others, many of them, fled before their enemies: and having by their faithful obedience in doing and suffering, opened a way for this state of peace and tranquillity which we of this generation are in the enjoyment of, shall any of us deny that faith, and in compliance with the antichristian notions of the times, set up for self-sufficient independent creatures? Shall any of us, who are the posterity or successors of those for whom God has done so great things, hammer out a religion which has none, or very little relation to him? God forbid, this will be (in the prophet's phrase) *For-saking him, the fountain of living water, and hewing to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns that will hold no water.*

And therefore I take this liberty, by way of friendly caution, to put you in remembrance of these things; and as it is evident beyond all contradiction, that the work of religion and godliness, wherever it is rightly brought forth, is the work of God, that we continually dwell near in spirit unto him, waiting upon him, praying to him, and trusting in him, both for remission of sins that are past, for his beloved Son the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the overcoming sin in the lust of it, and persevering in a life of holiness, which those that do, will in due time witness the end of their faith and hope answered, which is the complete salvation of their souls.

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SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
RELATING TO THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION;
WHEREIN

THE PRINCIPAL EVIDENCE OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION
IS FARTHER EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED; IN ANSWER
TO THE OBJECTIONS MADE AGAINST IT IN A LATE
VINDICATION OF THE BISHOP OF LITCHFIELD AND
COVENTRY.

WITH AN
APPENDIX
CONTAINING

SOME REMARKS ON A PASSAGE IN THE SECOND VO-
LUME OF BISHOP BURNET'S HISTORY OF HIS OWN TIMES.

PART III.

Rom. viii. 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spi-
rits, that we are the children of God.*

Mat. vii. 20. *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*

CONSIDERATIONS

PRESENT STATE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION

A. P. B. N. D. Y.

P. A. R. H.

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T H E

P R E F A C E.

WHEN I first published "Some Considerations on the Present State of the Christian Religion," I did it with a single view of being instrumental, among others, according to my small ability, in supporting the Christian cause. I had no intention of entering into controversy, or of ministering occasion for any.

Nor did I then think, that any under the profession of Christianity would have so far slighted what I recommend as the principal evidence of our holy religion, as to esteem it no evidence at all. But since, observing that the author I am concerned with has in effect opposed it, as, being a proof of our holy religion at all, and that with some marks of contempt, I thought myself obliged to take some notice of his objections.

The subject matter then of these Considerations is, in this respect, different from what it was in the two former parts, and instead of being a defence of the Christian Religion in general, it is now become a defence of the spiritual part of it, that part in
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which the power and efficacy of the whole consists, as to our living a virtuous, pious life, according to the precepts of Christ; not in opposition to the external, historical part, but in order to render every thing of that kind truly effectual for that one great end, the salvation of mankind: which though at first view, it does not seem to have a direct relation to the convincing unbelievers, yet in reality considered as the only true foundation of a religious life, it is the best argument against them, by representing Christianity in its pure original state, in which state it is truly amiable and desirable, (which is what I would be understood to mean by it). And divesting it of those false coverings, which men by their traditions and inventions have put upon it.

That there is a real occasion for such a distinction will appear to any one, that compares the present state of Christianity, with the primitive state of it, and the different effects it generally produced then, and now: and that degeneracy in practice, owing to a degeneracy in principle, which all that consider things rightly cannot but observe, and is just matter of complaint amongst the thoughtful part of Christian professors; of which, we have, among many others, the sentiments of the learned Dr. Waterland lately published, added to those of Dr. Sherlock, whose words he quotes*. ‘ I shall

* Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity. p. 62, 63, 64.

' chuse here to express myself in the ex-
 ' cellent words of a celebrated writer,
 ' whom I have before quoted more than
 ' once.' " Our salvation by Christ does
 " not only consist in the expiation of our
 " sins, &c.—but in the communication of
 " divine grace and power to renew and sanc-
 " tify us : and this is every where in scrip-
 " ture attributed to the Holy Spirit, as
 " his peculiar office in the œconomy of
 " man's salvation. And it must make a
 " fundamental change in the doctrine of
 " divine grace and assistance, to deny the
 " divinity of the Holy Spirit. For can a
 " creature be the universal spring and foun-
 " tain of divine grace and life ? Can a
 " finite creature be a kind of universal soul
 " to the whole Christian church, and to
 " every sincere member of it ? Can a crea-
 " ture make such close application to our
 " minds, know our thoughts, set bounds
 " to our passions, inspire us with new af-
 " fections and desires, and be more inti-
 " mate to us than we are to ourselves ? If
 " a creature be the only instrument and
 " principle of grace, we shall soon be
 " tempted, either to deny the grace of God,
 " or to make it only an external thing, and
 " entertain very mean conceits of it. All
 " these miraculous gifts, which were be-
 " stowed on the apostles and primitive
 " Christians, for the edification of the
 " church, all the graces of the Christian
 " life, are the fruits of the spirit."—

* What this excellent writer has here said,
 * appears all to be very right and just;
 * and his observation of the doctrine of di-
 * vine grace, being likely to suffer much
 * by a denial of the divinity of the Holy
 * Spirit, has been too sadly verified in the
 * event. How jejunely, how sparingly,
 * have the abettors of the new schemes in-
 * sisted upon the doctrine of grace, and of
 * the invisible workings of the Holy Spirit,
 * though scripture is full of the subject.'

Upon which I shall only remark, that both Dr. Sherlock, and Dr. Waterland, have fully confirmed what I have writ in favour of this divine principle: and what the latter has mentioned by way of complaint, viz. How jejunely, how sparingly have the abettors of the new schemes, (meaning the Antitrinitarians) insisted on the doctrine of grace, and the invisible workings of the Divine Spirit? is too applicable to the general part of the writers, even in favour of Christianity; the author I am concerned with in particular: whereas in truth, this is not only the ground and foundation of right Christian conversation and practice, but is also the true spring from whence all right worship, a right ministry, and the right use of all other external helps in the church of Christ proceed; in all which cases it is, in the words of Dr. Sherlock, the universal soul to the whole Christian church; and this not in words and profession only, but to be experienced in a certain
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sensible manner, as in the primitive times : for which reason, though it is not desirable to be thus concerned in debates and controversies, especially about things that are in themselves clear and evident ; yet I am glad that this opportunity is given, to bear a public testimony to the world, to the sufficiency of this principle, in which the soul of the Christian Religion consists ; and which, I believe, in God's due time, by its own virtue and power, will prevail in the world, against all opposition. I shall only add, that if the author I am concerned with, should think what I have writ worth any farther notice, he is desired to keep close to the point which concerns my argument only, and not make excursions into other matters foreign to it : and I should be better pleased also, if he would favour me with his name,

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SOME
CONSIDERATIONS
RELATING TO THE
PRESENT STATE
OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.
PART III.

WHEN I resolved to write something under the title of *Considerations on the Present State of the Christian Religion*, I had these two things chiefly in view. 1. To give a plain account of the Christian Religion out of the scriptures: and 2dly, To recommend an evidence of the truth of it, agreeable to that account.

That which led me to give that plain account of the Christian Religion, was, that notwithstanding the many great bodies of divinity, and the multitude of smaller systems, already extant, it appeared to me, such a thing was wanting: because since the first publication of the Christian Religion to the world, its professors had introduced various forms, according to the different notions and inventions of particular persons, and churches, as well as, in general, had suffered a great declension

sion from its primitive state of purity and simplicity, and the present circumstances of some of them were too much like those of the Jews in the days of Christ, who told them, Mat. xv. 8, 9. *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

It is evident to any impartial observer, that the worship of too many Christian professors consists very much in externals; in formalities, in lip-services, in pompous rites and ceremonies, which the primitive Christians were strangers to; and are so far from promoting that worship of God in spirit and truth, which our Lord recommends, that they rather tend to divert the mind from it: for as this consists in an inward humble application in heart and spirit to the throne of grace, for help and assistance, in the present real sense of our wants and infirmities, and in thanksgivings for mercies already received, in the true sense and remembrance of them: what relation have these external formalities to this? So far from it, that they rather tend to draw men's minds off from this sense, into a fond conceit that they want nothing; but being in the performance of their duty, as they take it, in attending such outward ceremonies and formalities, they content themselves with it, and so go and come like the door upon the hinges, still remaining the same persons, at best but mere formalists; of whom it may be truly said, *In vain do they worship me*, as receiving no spiritual profit or improvement by their worship. However, though this is the case of such as are thus exercised, and look no farther, of which there are too many; yet there are others (no doubt) who though in the practice of this formal worship, in compliance with custom, education,

tion, &c. yet being in the main sincerely devoted in heart and spirit towards God, he is pleased to accept their prayers, as proceeding from an honest mind.

For the same reason, I thought it necessary to reduce the doctrines of Christianity to their primitive written standard, the holy scriptures; because many of the doctrines received among Christians were the commandments of men; that is, systems of faith agreed on by general councils, or synods of particular churches, each of which have something peculiar to themselves, and contradicting others, which cannot be all true, and therefore must necessarily puzzle and perplex the minds of those who are sincerely disposed to believe, and live, according to sound doctrine: Add to this, the different ways of expressing and explaining the same doctrine, in which, great heats and animosities have arisen, in former ages as well as the present, when men have gone about to explain and comprehend what is, to our narrow faculties and capacities, incomprehensible; the consequence of which has been, that the minds of the contending parties, instead of being edified and built up in the most holy faith, that faith which purifies the heart, and gives victory over the world, works by love, with many other excellent properties which the scripture applies to it, have been corrupted from the simplicity of the truth as it is in Christ, and the Christian Religion is become the subject of much unprofitable disputation, whilst the main thing, *viz.* the love to God and our neighbour, with the other practical parts of our holy religion, are in a great measure lost or neglected.

This being the present state of the Christian Religion, at least with regard to too many of its professors, I resolved, in writing those considerations

tions upon it, to conduct myself as one that knew nothing of any particular sets of doctrine, or articles of faith now extant, besides what were contained in the holy scriptures: and therefore my chief care was to make a collection from thence, of such doctrines as had relation principally to these two great ends of Christ's coming into the world, viz. *The restoring mankind to the favour of God, and acceptance with him, notwithstanding their having been sinners, by that propitiatory sacrifice of Christ once offered on the cross: and the redeeming them from the power and dominion of sin, and bringing them into, and preserving them in, a state of sanctification and holiness, by the power and virtue of his grace and good spirit, inwardly operating to that purpose.* Both which taken together, and not the one without the other, is that salvation which Jesus Christ came into the world to procure for mankind.

I mention this here briefly, by way of introduction to what I have to say in answer to the exceptions of the author of *The Vindication of the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry*, to shew, that that author is mistaken in the very entrance of his observations on my *two tracts*, which he begins with these words, p. 197. "And of this art of palliating the more ancient Quakerism, we have an egregious instance in Mr. Arscott's *late Considerations about the Present State of the Christian Religion.*" Whereas, in truth, this was no part of my design; so far from it, that in writing the first part, though it is much to my satisfaction, that the account there given of the Christian Religion is agreeing with the genuine principles of that people, I purposely forbore mentioning the Quakers in it, partly because of the unaccountable prejudice which that people lay under among some; and also, because the doctrine there advanced, was not first taken up by

by me upon joining myself in society with that people, but was according to my constant belief and judgment, before I walked in communion with them, or was well acquainted with their persons or principles ; and I therefore joined myself in religious society with them, because I found their doctrines, upon enquiry, most agreeing with the doctrines of the primitive Christians, recorded in the scriptures of the New Testament: the Holy Spirit, (as I firmly believe) opening my understanding, and assisting me in making such enquiry, and forming such judgment. This being the case, what I writ was not to palliate Quakerism ancient or modern, as this author insinuates, but to declare what was my constant faith and judgment, relating to the peculiar doctrines and facts of the Christian Religion, both before and since I came under that denomination.

Having given this brief account of my design in publishing these tracts, so far as concerns the doctrines therein advanced, which this author has no where, that I remember, objected to; it remains that I say something to that part which relates to the evidence of the Christian Religion, which I call the *principal evidence* ; but this author is so far from admitting it as such, that (though he does not deny, but acknowledges the doctrine which is the foundation of it, yet) he will not allow it to be an evidence at all. The matter in controversy then between him and me, is not any point of doctrine ; for he does not charge me with any error of that kind, but what he charges me with, is, assigning a wrong evidence of the Christian Religion. For which he gives reasons, first in general, and then in particular ; in which method I shall follow him, first, by farther explaining the evidence of Christianity recommended by me, and then answering, so far as appears necessary, his particular

particular objections against it, and this with a single regard to truth, and for no other consideration whatsoever; for truth and a sound judgment, in a matter of this moment, is above all things to be desired, and as that was the only motive which first induced me to write upon it, so it is the only inducement for me to write in defence of it.

In the first place then, to state the matter in debate, I lay it down as a foundation, that a complete evidence of the Christian Religion, ought to be an evidence of it considered in all its parts. And as there are evidences of several kinds, so the nearer any particular evidence comes to this character, the greater is its weight and cogency.

Again, as there are two parts of the Christian Religion, viz. the external, and the internal part, so there are two kinds of evidences under the same denominations, that is to say, the prophecies of the ancient prophets, and the miracles of Christ and his apostles, which I call external evidences, (though others also may be added under that class) and the purity of the doctrines and precepts of Christianity, together with the experience of the work of sanctification, through the spirit of Christ, which I call the internal evidences of it.

Farther, Christ, the author of the Christian Religion, is to be considered under a two-fold character; as man, who was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; and as God, in which sense he was in the beginning, before all worlds, and is called in scripture, *the word, the wisdom, and power of God*. In the first sense he was, and is, outward. In the last, he fills all things, and is present every where, more especially considered in that relation he bears to mankind as their Saviour and Sanctifier, is present in the hearts of men, to quicken

quicken and enlighten them for their assistance in the work of repentance, conversion, sanctification, regeneration, and complete salvation. And as what Christ did and suffered for mankind, was necessary, by the appointment of God the Father, for their reconciliation to him, notwithstanding their sins and trespasses against him; so his presence with them in them, is as necessary for their overcoming sin, and bringing them into a state of holiness and acceptance with him.

And this last is as truly a part of the Christian Religion as the first; and both taken together, make up the whole entire Christian Religion; and therefore, when we speak or write of it, we mean that religion which has relation to Christ in both these senses, or else we do not take in the whole idea of it, but a part only.

For these reasons, though it be true, that the Christian Religion, "originally and immediately relates to Jesus of Nazareth, as without," according to this author's assertion, p. 201. "And that the great point was at first, and now is, whether he is the true Messiah, and answers to the distinguishing characters of that person:" for without doubt, the Christian Religion as an outward profession, distinct from Judaism, Paganism, &c. was properly so denominated from Jesus of Nazareth, who was also called Christ, and under that appellation commenced soon after the time that Jesus of Nazareth appeared and suffered in the flesh; and it is so far the great point in question, whether he is the true Messiah, and answers to the distinguishing characters of that person, that if those characters are not applicable to him, then Jesus of Nazareth is not the Messiah; and consequently, all that is built upon that supposition must fall to the ground. Yet though this is true, it is also as true, that the Christian Religion does not relate to Jesus of Nazareth as without only,
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and the intire adequate idea or character of the Messiah, given by the ancient prophets, as well as the evangelists and apostles, is not confined to the account given of him as an outward person, then only existing; but regards him in a much more extensive sense, *viz.* as existing before all worlds, and filling all things, in which sense he is called the *word of God, the power and wisdom of God*, by which all things were at first created, and are still sustained. And in this latter sense he is inward, as well as in the former sense he was outward. For being God, he fills all things, and more especially as a spirit is immediately present with the mind of man, which is a spirit, quickening and enlightening of it for the purposes before declared, all which is inward, and follows necessarily from the nature of things, as well as that it is abundantly declared in holy scripture.

For the same analogy, or way of reasoning, holds good in this case, as in the case of worship, *viz.* according to our Lord's rational way of expressing it, *God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* The reason of which arises from the spiritual nature of God, and of the mind of man, and therefore that intercourse or communication between God and man in the great duty of worship is spiritual.

As this is the case respecting worship, so it is the same respecting all intercourse or communication between God and the mind of man; for it follows by the same way of reasoning, *viz. Christ, as God, is a spirit, and therefore they that know him, must know him in spirit, that is, inwardly.* If this be not the case, there is no knowing him in order to salvation at all, for he is removed now, as to his outward appearance, and consequently that saying of Christ, *viz. This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,* would have no relation to us
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of this generation, but we should unavoidably be destitute of that in which consists life eternal, an absurdity by no means to be admitted; from whence therefore it must follow, that Christians in all ages, if they partake of salvation through them, must know him in this manner present with them: and indeed this only is in a proper sense, knowledge: that assent which we give to the facts relating to this outward appearance, is properly a belief, depending on the testimony of those that recorded them, and those that preserved that record to this time, which without doubt is a very good ground of such a belief; but yet is a distinct thing from knowledge. A belief, is an assent of the mind to the truth of some facts, or properties, or operations of something when absent upon the credit of some testimony. Knowledge, is an assent of the mind to the truth of some facts, or properties, or operations of something when present: thus men believe that Christ laid a foundation for their salvation, by what he did and suffered for them in the days of his flesh: but they only know him actually to save them, or to complete that work, by what he does for them in them: so that true Christians not only believe his life, death, and resurrection, to be real facts, or events, which came to pass about seventeen hundred years ago; but they *know him* now (by the effects which he produces) *and the power of his resurrection, being made conformable to his death*, by his presence with them, helping them *to mortify the deeds of the body*, and raise their affections from earthly to heavenly things, by which *they are renewed in the spirit of their minds, and strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man*. All which can mean nothing but an inward immediate influence on the mind of man, and follows directly from the nature of the gospel dispensation, and the office of Christ as Saviour and Sanctifier. In which sense he is present

sent with men in all ages, completely to work that salvation in them, which in the days of his flesh he purchased for them.

Now, as the truth of this inward knowledge of Christ depends on the doctrine of his divinity, for it cannot otherwise be accounted for, that Christ should be thus present to the minds of men, unless he is God as well as man; and if he is God, then the truth of his inward presence is unanswerably established.

For these reasons I shall lay before my present opponent, a few texts of scripture, both out of the writings of the prophets, and the evangelists and apostles, for confirmation of that fundamental Christian doctrine, not to convince him of it as what he does not believe, but to put him and my reader in remembrance of it, as what directly relates to my present argument, and remind him of this consequence, which I believe he was not aware of, viz. *That to deny or oppose the inward presence of Christ, is to deny the divinity of Christ.*

First, Out of that evangelical prophet Isaiah, chap. ix. 6. *Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.* Mic. v. 2. *But thou Bethlehem Ephratak, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is, to be a ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old from everlasting.* Compare these texts with John i. from ver. 1. to the 14th, which, because it expresses the divinity of Christ in the fullest and clearest terms, I shall present it intire to my reader's view. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing*

thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John: the same came for a witness, to bear witness of the light, that all men through him (or through it, for so it might be rendered) might believe. He was not that light, but was sent to bear witness of that light. That was the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them he gave power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth.

Again, Coloss. i. from ver. 15. to 19. the apostle speaking of Christ, says, *Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature, for by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him and he is before all things, and by him all things consist, and he is the head of the body, the church. Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he may have the pre-eminence: for it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.* To the like effect, Heb. i, 2, 3. the author speaking of Christ, says, *By whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things, by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the*

right hand of the Majesty on high. And ver. 10, 11, 12. Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands. They shall perish, but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed, but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

These texts are so full to the point, that it would be needless to add any others, (though many others might be added) to prove that, though the Christian Religion, considered as an external institution, originally and immediately relates to Jesus of Nazareth, as without, yet the Christian Religion, considered in all its parts, does not relate to him only as such; but the inspired writers, both of the Old and New Testament, speak of him as existing also from the beginning, and ascribe to him as he is *the word of God, and the wisdom and power of God*, the whole work of creation and providence, (which, by the bye, is a full confirmation from the testimony of the holy scriptures of the argument in my *second part*, drawn from the reason and nature of things), viz. That by Jesus Christ as God, all things were created in the beginning, and are sustained to this day. And with respect to mankind, that he is the light and life of the souls of men, always present with them to enlighten their darkness, quicken their deadness, strengthen their weakness; and, in a word, to lead them into, and preserve them in, a steady course of virtue and piety.

This then being an essential part of Christianity, it is necessary it should be attended with a certain evidence of truth, as well as what relates to Jesus of Nazareth, as without; for the principal thing is not simply, that there was such a person as Jesus of Nazareth; nor this only, that he then
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did and suffered what was recorded of him ; but also and principally, that he was then, and still remains to be, the Saviour of mankind : that is, he that saves them from sin itself, by his inward and spiritual appearance, as well as from wrath to come, the punishment due to it, by that one propitiatory sacrifice once offered on the cross. This being the case, a complete Christian faith includes a belief in him in both these relations ; that is, a firm trust and confidence in his power for the overcoming our corruptions, by help inwardly and spiritually received from him ; and upon our thus receiving and obeying of him, not trusting in any merits or doings of our own, but on the mercy of God, for the remission of sins that are past, on the account of that one offering. The first is to be known by every person singly in himself, in all ages of the world, and is that by which he becomes actually the Saviour of particulars. The last is that by which he is the general Saviour of all men potentially ; that is, puts them in a capacity of salvation : the first then is that by which the benefit of the last is received and applied, and without which, it cannot, nor ever will, be received ; and is therefore that in which the whole of the Christian Religion centers, as to that good which every particular believer receives by it ; and ought therefore, (as I said) in an especial manner to be attended with a certain evidence : because without such evidence, we cannot be assured that the coming of Christ into the world was of any real benefit to mankind. I shall therefore consider this evidence, first with respect to him that is in the experience of it ; and then as it relates to others.

To the first, Is it reasonable to suppose that a man should enter upon this work, and make some good progress in it, and not know it ? Does such

an one find no real change in the frame and disposition of his mind; by which he can certainly distinguish between a converted and an unconverted state? Certainly, as long as there are real differences between good and evil, virtue and vice; and real sensible comforts attend the one, and pain and anxiety of mind the other, of which we have frequent mention in the holy scriptures, confirmed by the experience of all that seriously apply themselves to it: the difference will plainly appear, even from the reason and nature of things. But when the effecting this change is declared to be the great end of Christ's coming into this world, and men by believing, receiving, and obeying him, become thus reformed, (which has been in all ages, the case of all true Christians) they see these blessed fruits and effects of their faith, in a much clearer light; for who can discern the difference between two opposite or contrary states, so clearly as those who have known both? A vicious ungodly man remaining such, cannot see the beauty and excellency of a virtuous religious course of life, or at least but very dimly, nor compare it with the contrary. But they that have been in time past fornicators, idolators, adulterers, or any otherwise vicious ungodly livers, but now are become *washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of God*, which was the case of some of the church of Corinth formerly, and is more or less the case of all real Christians, who know the benefit of their Christian profession, to this day; these see the difference between the one and the other, in the most clear light, and at the same time are sensible that it was not of themselves that this change was wrought: for if they had followed their own spirits, their old way of thinking, their own vicious appetites and inclinations still, they had remained
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the same persons, or perhaps grown worse: but that it was by means of something which discovered to them their false corrupt reasonings, and gave a new turn to the bent and inclination of their minds, by which they were brought to see things differently from their former way of thinking, and pursue things contrary to their former course of life, so that they become changed inwardly in spirit, and outwardly in conversation.

Now the end of Christ's coming, which was to destroy the works of the devil, and to purify and sanctify the hearts of men, being fully answered as to these, there is nothing wanting to them of a full evidence and confirmation of the truth of it. The only difficulty that remains, is, How far this can be esteemed an evidence of the truth of the Christian Religion to others? Against which we have many objections raised by the author under my present consideration, as well as some others of great name, to which I shall speak particularly, after having first given some general reasons, added to those already advanced by me, for asserting this to be not only an evidence, but the principal evidence of the Christian Religion.

First, *That it is an evidence at large of the Christian Religion.* In order to it, I suppose that this inward work in heart and spirit, not only operates to the making clean the inside, but also appears in fruits agreeable thereunto; so that the conversation of such is remarkably changed from evil to good, from vicious to virtuous; and if this be the case, as most certainly it is, then according to our Lord's rule, *By their fruits you shall know them*, Mat. vii. 20. where it is observable, that our Lord makes this the criterion, or rule of judging false prophets from true ones, pretenders to inspiration from truly inspired persons; for he says, ver. 15. *Beware of false prophets*

phets which come to you in sheeps-clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves, ye shall know them by their fruits : do men gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles ? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, but a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire : wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. Intimating plainly, that the real good or evil fruits or effects, produced by a prophet, or any person pretending to revelation from God, is a certain rule to judge whether his pretences are real or feigned ; which good fruits consist not in bare outside shews, such as sheeps-clothing, which may be put on whilst the heart is not right ; but in works agreeable to the nature of the sheep, (and contrary to that of wolves) which are elsewhere called, *The fruits of the spirit*, viz. Love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, Gal. v. 22, 23. which, in whomsoever they constantly and habitually appear, give the greatest sanction to the doctrines and precepts which he publishes to the world : because it is impossible to conceive that such an one should go about to delude or deceive others, or that God should suffer him to be so far deluded himself, as to believe and publish a lie. So good a tree cannot bring forth such evil fruit.

Again, This is not only a rule to distinguish false prophets from true ; but also the disciples of Christ in general, to whom he preached that most excellent sermon on the mount, are called *the light of the world*, on account of their good works, as Mat. v. 14, 15, 16. *Ye are the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid, neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all that are in the house ; let your light so shine before men,*

men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father, which is in heaven. In this sense light and evidence are synonymous, and our Lord, by telling them that they were the light of the world, and advising them to let their light so shine, &c. plainly means, that by their good works they should give evidence to the world, that they were the children of God, which would be a means to induce them to glorify God on their behalf, and consequently that he himself, whose disciples they were, and in whom they had believed, came from God, and therefore the doctrines he preached ought to be believed and received by mankind; inasmuch as it cannot reasonably be conceived, that a deceiver or impostor should be the author of such good works, according to the maxim before-mentioned, viz. *An evil tree cannot bring forth good fruits.* To which I would add that great badge of discipleship, *love*; in which all Christian virtues are comprehended, which is declared to be both an evidence to him that has it, and to others, as 1 John iii. 14. *We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.* And John xiii. 35. *By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one unto another.* Christian love then is of that particular excellency, that it evidences itself to those in whom it is, and by its fruits and effects, which surpass those of all other kinds of love in their nature and extent, demonstrates itself to others. I shall only add, that good works, according to the apostle James, are an evidence of the reality and sincerity of faith itself, as James ii. 18. *Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* What kind of works the apostle means appears from ver. 15, 16, viz. *works of love, mercy, and charity*; which, in whomsoever they are

found, make it appear that the faith of such is of a right kind; it is an active, and lively, and not a dead faith, because it works by love, Gal. v. 6.

Having thus proved from scripture (which is a proper proof to this author) that the experience of sanctification through the spirit of Christ, is an evidence to him that knows it, of the Christian Religion, and by the fruits and effects which it produces, is also an evidence of the same in some measure to others: I proceed to prove, both from scripture and reason, that it is the principal evidence of the truth of our holy Religion, not with design to put a slur upon the proofs of Christianity arising from the facts relating to Jesus Christ, as this author is pleased to charge me, (or at least as a consequence of what I have writ) p. 197, or to weaken them in any degree, as he insinuates p. 198. But, on the contrary, I believe it will appear, that though I call the inward testimony of the spirit, the principal evidence of the Christian Religion to him that knows it, and that by its good fruits and effects, it becomes the principal evidence to others; that this is so far from weakening the proofs arising from external facts, that it strengthens and establishes them, and that a proof of this nature is such, that without it, all external proofs would be either no proofs at all, or at least would be liable to considerable difficulties and objections. But if this appear beyond contradiction, these remain in their full strength; and if so, this, with respect to these, is the principal proof.

The external evidences of Christianity, which by our late writers are esteemed the principal ones, are *the prophecies of the ancient prophets, and the miracles of Christ and his apostles*; and of these two they esteem the last the greatest, as being the nearest and most immediate proof, and therefore,

fore, some writers call it a proof of the first; that is, of the truth and right application of the prophecies to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah: so that according to them, the whole evidence of the Christian Religion centers in it, that is, in miracles.

By miracles I understand, in the words of a late judicious * author, sensible effects of the special and extraordinary power of God: which without question, when they appear to be so, are an undoubted evidence that the person, in whom that power resides, acts under a divine direction, but this does not always appear at first view; that is, works which are real effects of a divine power, are not always self-evident, but there is need of some medium, by which we may judge them to be such; which medium, when found out, puts it intirely out of doubt, and without it, the mind would be under continual suspence about them. This medium then, whatever it be, is a proof of the reality and divine authority of miracles. The author last cited, in the words following his definition of miracles, acknowledges this: "Every action indeed, which apparently exceeds the power of the agent who performs it, may in a general sense be called a miracle; but unless it appear from the nature and circumstance of it, to be wrought by God, it cannot be an evidence of a divine revelation." And then he proceeds to argue from the nature and circumstance of the Christian miracles, that they were not wrought by the assistance of evil spirits, or by the slight, the skill, or confederacy of men. The first in these words, *viz.* "That the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles, were not wrought by the assistance of evil spi-

* Necessity of Divine Revelation, by J. Rogers, D. D. p. 134.

" rits,

“ rits, I think the doctrines which they attest are
 “ a sufficient proof. It could serve no interest of
 “ wicked and malicious spirits to give credit to
 “ so pure, so rational a morality, so conducive
 “ to the private and social happiness of mankind,
 “ and to so holy and spiritual worship of the
 “ Deity.”

The second he proves from the nature and circumstances of the facts reported, many of which are such as manifestly exceed all human power, of which he gives several instances, and therefore that they could not be wrought by contrivance of men, &c. The purity of the doctrine then, and the nature and circumstance of the miracles of Christ and his apostles, are the medium by which they are proved not to be the acts of evil spirits, nor the contrivance of wicked men, nor of any thing else which can be assigned, but the effects of a divine power; therefore they are the effects of a divine power.

But though this is a step towards what I have in view, yet it does not come up to it fully, there is yet a farther and stronger proof that the miracles of Christ and his apostles were real and divine, arising not only from the purity of the doctrines and precepts delivered by them, but from the effects which they produced; that is, from the power which they that believed in Christ received to live accordingly: for notwithstanding the purity of the doctrines delivered by Christ and his apostles, added to the miracles wrought by them; yet if there had appeared no real effects of them in a visible reformation of life in those that received the truth of the gospel in the love of it, these alone, void of those happy effects, had not been sufficient of themselves, to put the truth of the Christian Religion entirely out of question: for supposing it possible (though in the highest

highest degree improbable in the present case) that evil men may publish good doctrines and precepts, to answer some evil purposes which do not at present appear; yet that evil men, or men under the influence of a wicked spirit, should not only publish to the world doctrines and precepts of the purest nature, but also should themselves be constant practisers and examples of these precepts they recommend to others; and farther, that those who received their doctrine, were not only brought into the belief of certain facts and propositions, which before they were strangers to, but became changed into other men, of blasphemers and persecutors, hateful, and hating one another, became preachers and practisers of love and meekness, of truth and righteousness, which was the case generally of the first converts to Christianity, (and is of all real Christians at this day). This was, and is, the strongest proof that the nature of the thing is capable of, that the miracles of Christ and his apostles were the effects of a divine power. It is arguing directly from the effect to the cause.

For admitting what is evidently the case, that the miracles of Christ and his apostles are actions which apparently exceed the power of the agents (that is, considering them as mere men) and there arises a question, Whether they are the effects of a divine or diabolical, of a good or evil spirit? To determine this question, we need only consider, Do they manifestly tend to good? Yes. Do they effect that good for which they are designed? Yes. Then they cannot be the effect of an evil, but must be of a good spirit, (that is) of God himself, or such an act under his direction. For such as the effect is, such must the cause be; *good fruit cannot proceed from an evil tree*: and therefore, as the miracles of Christ and his apostles,

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were the remote cause of those good effects, and the spirit of Christ the immediate cause of them. This proves directly, that the miracles of Christ and his apostles were real and divine, and without this they had been destitute of such a proof. For suppose farther, an action never so great and wonderful, yet if nothing of good appears, either in the design of it, or the effects attending it; we may be at a loss indeed on whom to place it, and there it must end. But if such an action be evidently designed for good to mankind, and in some good measure answers that end, we cannot err in ascribing that action to God, who is the author of every good and perfect gift.

To illustrate this, let us suppose that two persons appeared in the world under these two characters or circumstances, the one working many wonderful works, such as in appearance exceed the power of the agent, or any natural, human power, but no good is procured thereby to mankind in general, or to any particular. The other works nothing of that kind, but by preaching, conversation and example, he becomes such an instrument of good, in the reformation of mankind, that it is evident, some secret virtue or power, as a blessing from God, attends his pious labours. Which of these two gives the best testimony of his divine mission? Without question the last. And if so, it proves, that inward good effects manifesting themselves outwardly in good fruits, are of themselves a greater evidence of the divine mission, than outward sensible miracles of themselves; and consequently the principal evidence consists in the good fruits or effects: but where both these concur, which is manifestly the case of the miracles of Christ, and their effects, there is every thing that is necessary towards the completest

completest evidence of the whole that can be expected.

Though I know no fallacy in this reasoning, and am sure there is no design in it to lessen the authority of miracles, yet because it may perhaps appear new to some, that I may not be thought singular in it, I shall produce two authorities in confirmation of it, from men justly esteemed, the one for his great improvements in the art of reasoning, the other, for his learned, elaborate defences of the Christian Religion. John Locke, in his chapter of the *degrees of assent*, expresses himself thus: " Though the common experience, " and the ordinary course of things, have justly " a mighty influence on the minds of men, to " make them give or refuse credit to any thing " proposed to their belief; yet there is one case, " where the strangeness of the fact lessens not the " assent to a fair testimony given of it; for where " such supernatural events are suitable to ends, " aimed at by him who has the power to change " the course of nature; there, under such circumstances, they may be the fitter to procure belief, by how much the more they are beyond " or contrary to ordinary observation. This is " the proper case of miracles, which well attested do not only find credit themselves, but " give it also to other truths, which need such " confirmation." Where it is evident, that in " the judgment of this author, it is not the strangeness of the facts alone, that constitutes divine miracles, and renders them fit to procure belief; but the suitability of them to ends worthy of God, who alone has the power to change the course of nature: and the ends of the Christian Religion being plainly such, this circumstance gives the miracles of Christ and his apostles the utmost sanction they are capable of.

Dr.

Dr. Stillingfleet is yet more full and explicit on this subject, in his *Origines Sacrae*, book 2. chap. 10. having first supposed the possibility of impostures, viz. *That wicked men may pretend to a power of working miracles, and either by some contrivance of their own, or by a delusion of evil spirits, may deceive others into a belief, that they are acted by a divine power*: of which he gives several instances among the Jews, Samaritans, and Heathens: for these reasons he lays it down as a necessary ground of certainty in the case of miracles, that there ought to be certain *κριτήρια* or notes of difference, whereby to know divine miracles from delusions of the senses, and the impostures of the devil. One, which is the third in order, he expresses in these words, sect 7. “Where miracles
 “are true and divine, there the effects which follow them, upon the minds of those that believe them, are true and divine, *i. e.* the effect of believing them, is the drawing men from sin unto God: this the primitive believers insisted much upon, as an undoubted evidence that the miracles of Christ were wrought by a divine power, because the effect which followed them was the work of conversion of souls from sin and idolatry to God and Christ, and all true piety and virtue; as the effect of the miracles of Moses was the drawing people off from superstition and idolatry, to the worship of the true God; so the effect which followed the belief of the miracles of Christ in the world, was the purging men’s souls from all sin and wickedness, to make them new creatures, and to make them live in all exactness and holiness of conversation.” And adds, “Now is it possible, that these should be the effects of any evil spirit? But on the contrary we see the effect of all impostures, and pretended miracles
 “wrought

“ wrought by diabolical power, was to bring
 “ men off from God to sin, and to dissolve that
 “ strict obligation to duty, which was laid on
 “ men by the gospel of Christ.” And gives for
 instances the case of Simon Magus and others.
 I refer the reader to that whole chapter, and the
 foregoing, for an excellent dissertation on the
 subject of miracles: but thus much is sufficient
 to shew, that in this learned author’s judgment,
 first, miracles might be counterfeited to that de-
 gree, as to deceive the unwary; that therefore it
 is necessary there should be some certain rules to
 distinguish right from false, divine from diabolical.
 And lastly, that the blessed effects produced by those who are endued with that power,
 are an undoubted evidence, in the judgment of
 the primitive Christians, as well as his own, that
 miracles wrought by such were of the right kind;
 and that therefore, the miracles of Christ and
 his apostles were real and divine.

I fear, lest by this time I may be thought to
 labour this point too strenuously, upon which I
 think it necessary to declare, that I am no far-
 ther desirous of success in this controversy, than
 as I believe the cause of Christianity is concerned
 in it; for it is a just matter of complaint, that
 the generality of writers of late on that side, by
 the Christian Religion, mean either the external
 historical part only, or the notional speculative
 part: the practical part, and what relates to it,
 has too small a share in their writings; at least
 this is certain, that they do not esteem it an es-
 sential distinguishing part of Christianity, but con-
 found the piety and morality of the Christian, with
 that of the Heathen and Mahometan, (as this au-
 thor does, which shall be considered in its place,
 and the proper distinguishing characters of the one
 and the other declared) and therefore they allow
 it

it no place at all as an evidence of the truth of our holy religion; whereas in truth, the reformation of mankind in practice, in a greater degree and extent than ever was effected by the philosophy of the heathen, or the law of Moses, or any other means whatsoever, was the great design of Christ's coming into the world, and is therefore an essential constituent part of his religion, and ought therefore to be attended with a certain evidence of truth; or else the Christian Religion, so far as concerns the great end of Christ's coming into the world, falls to the ground.

Having thus endeavoured to prove, and I hope with success, that the work of sanctification through the spirit of Christ, is the principal evidence of the Christian Religion; and that without any prejudice or putting a slur, or weakening the proofs arising from the external facts, but by strengthening and confirming of them; I proceed to consider the conduct of this author relating thereto, and first, I observe he has done me justice, p. 200, and *alibi*. "It must be acknowledged, that Mr. Arscot has plainly acknowledged the reality of those facts, which he calls the external historical part of Christianity; and has wrote in behalf of the prophecies as fulfilled by Christ, and the miracles that were performed by him and his apostles, as two great evidences of the truth of Christianity," which he again declares, p. 207, he sees with satisfaction. It would be a pleasure to me, if I could say with equal truth, that I see with the like satisfaction, that he has acknowledged as plainly, the reality of the inward experiences, and outward fruits and effects, of that which I call the internal and experimental part of Christianity, which (as I have before observed) is an essential part of
our

our holy religion, as the external facts relating to it. But instead of that, though he has acknowledged the truth of it in general terms, and is pleased to tell us, p. 198. " Sanctification in-
 " deed by the spirit is acknowledged by all true
 " Christians, and particularly is so in the liturgy,
 " articles and homilies of the church of England,
 " as well as in their great original the New Testa-
 " ment." Yet when he speaks of it more par-
 ticularly, we have it expressed in such terms of
 doubtfulness and uncertainty, as renders it of no
 spiritual benefit to him that has it, at least which
 he can certainly know to be such, and that con-
 sidered both as in itself, and also as an evidence
 of the truth of Christianity. As to the first, he
 tells us, p. 198. " Though experience is pretend-
 " ed, it is not easy to distinguish the operations
 " of the holy spirit from those of our own minds."
 As to the last, he calls it " An uncertain proof,
 " p. 197. A dubious bottom and weak founda-
 " tion may possibly be downright enthusiasm,
 " and the mere work of imagination, p. 198. A
 " very precarious proof, a weak absurd proof
 " of the truth of Christianity, highly unreason-
 " able in its own nature, plainly enthusiastical,
 " and without any foundation, p. 199. merely
 " imaginary, &c." Certainly the spiritual part
 of religion is at a very low ebb with this author:
 he does not indeed say directly, that the opera-
 tions of the holy spirit, in order to sanctification,
 cannot possibly be distinguished from those of our
 own minds; but what he says amounts to it in
 effect. For if they were at all distinguishable,
 though not easily, they would be so far an evi-
 dence of the truth of the Christian Religion: but
 according to him, they are not such in any de-
 gree; for he calls them thus considered, *a very*
 O *absurd*

absurd proof, highly unreasonable, enthusiastical, and without any foundation, that is, no proof at all.

It is indeed much to be lamented, that any professing the holy scriptures for their only rule in matters spiritual and religious, should write of this great Christian principle, which the scriptures so plainly bear the testimony to, in such terms of contempt. And yet this is not the case of this author only, but many others, some of whom, though they acknowledge such a principle in general words, and speak of it in the same forms of expression as the holy scriptures mention it, yet at the same time confess, they know not how to account for its operations, as a principle of knowledge and action in religious matters; and therefore, though they allow it to be something distinct in its operation from the ordinary faculties of our minds, yet they declare with this author, they know not how to distinguish them. Others, though they confess freely to the truth of an inward principle, and that, as they pretend, agreeable to the scriptures, yet they will not allow it to be any thing distinct from human reason at all, but the same thing under another name; and therefore they contend, that the texts of scripture which are generally referred to, for proof of a divine principle, are to be understood of reason, as, the word which was from the beginning, they tell us, ought to be translated *reason*, and that light which enlightens every man, is the light of reason. Now these two, though they seem to differ in the manner of expression, yet in truth and reality do not differ at all: for it is all one not to have such a principle given me for the help of my natural faculties, as to have it, and not know that I have it, or when I am in the exercise of it: and therefore, when these people's meaning is sifted to the bottom, they must

must acknowledge, as some of them do freely, that they know no other assistance in understanding the truths of religion, and applying them to their benefit and improvement, than the use of their natural faculties.

Now this is the soul of deism : for the more rational part of deists do not deny the scriptures in gross; on the contrary, they assent to a great part of them; and for the historical and doctrinal parts, they assent to as much as pleases them, upon the lame evidence that they believe other histories, that is, upon testimonies merely human, and the nature of things, as they term it; but they deny that the scriptures were written by divine inspiration; so that all, from first to last, with them, is to be tried by human reason, and no other standard. And this is much the case with those who profess the scriptures to be given by the inspiration of God, and consequently the matter of them to be matter of divine revelation, but deny the necessity of a divine assistance in the right use of them, at least as to any help which we can certainly know to be such. For whatever the scriptures were to those who writ them, they are received and believed by those upon a bottom of human reason only, by their own confession: and as it is with the professed deists, so it is with these, all centers in their own understandings as men; the only difference is, the deist by the use of his reason, such as it is, has found out objections against some parts of the scriptures: these, by the use of their reason, believe the scriptures: but both stand on the same bottom.

And these last, though in a general sense they may be termed Christians, yet in all ages they have proved the greatest enemies to Christianity, by bringing into the church endless disputations, which have split and divided the members of it,

one against another about words and phrases, to the destruction of the substance of religion, which is charity. And the same having extended to this age of the world, that which in one shape has appeared to distract and divide Christians one against another, the same thing in another shape is now at work to destroy the whole, by subverting, if possible, the very foundation, either by denying that there is any such thing as a principle distinct from our own reason, or rendering it an uncertain, and consequently an useless thing: whereas in truth, if we believe the doctrines, and facts, and precepts contained in the holy scriptures, we must at the same time believe that there is such a principle distinct from human reason, and distinguishable from it, because the scriptures themselves were written by the inspiration of it, and plainly declare it: for the terms, in which it is expressed in holy scripture, are such as plainly denote such a distinction.

For instance, it is frequently mentioned as a special gift of God to mankind, and men are therefore exhorted to pray for it, and did so, and God is said *to give his holy spirit to them that ask him*; and again, those that have it, are said to pray *that it may not be taken from them*: we have also mention made in scripture, of his *lifting up the light of his countenance upon good men*, which is matter of great joy and consolation to them; and at other times, of his *biding his face from them*, at which they are troubled, which shews, that it is not only distinct from the operations of their own minds, but distinguishable from them: for that which is given to, and may be taken from men, without destroying the essential properties of a man, is no constituent part of them, but something distinct from or superadded to them, and that which we are sensible when it is present,
and

and when absent, is distinguishable from every thing else by some peculiar properties of its own.

It must however be acknowledged, that as God is omnipresent, his spirit, which is inseparable from him, is always present to the mind of man, in that general sense, as he is every where: but when we speak of him as a principle of sanctification, opening the understanding, disposing the will, and setting the faculties of the mind and the powers of the body at work for this great end, this is a special act by which he is certainly and sensibly known to be present, *working in us to will and to do*, as the apostle expresses it, *according to his own good pleasure*, that is, beginning this work when he pleases, and in every step of it, acting freely. And therefore, though he is always present with all men, and with good men especially, by a secret invisible hand of power supporting them, and preserving them from evil, when they are not sensible of it, yet he is not always known to be so, but then only when he is pleased thus to make himself known, when all this while the man is in the free use of his reason as a man, and all the faculties relating thereto, without intermission: which shews a plain easy distinction, founded on a real difference between this divine principle and the faculties of the mind of man; the former acting sometimes upon the latter, and directing of them, and the latter acting sometimes under the direction of the former, and sometimes without it. But if we regard the distinction of these principles, as it appears in the holy scriptures, it is so plainly declared there, that to deny it, is in effect to render a great part of the scriptures of the Old and New Testament useless and insignificant.

But perhaps it may be said, that I argue fallaciously on this subject, by expressing myself in

terms which those who assert the identity of reason and revelation, considered as an inward principle of knowledge and action in things spiritual, do not make use of, by calling it human reason. To which I answer, that I could name several of the greatest advocates for reason and opposers of divine revelation as distinct from it, who expressly call it our own reason, fallible as it may be, or human reason, such as it is with all its disadvantages, and assert, *that this is all rational creatures have to trust to.* But I am not now speaking to these, but to some who profess the scriptures, and esteem themselves, and would be esteemed, Christians: To these I say, if by reason, which some of them contend for, they mean not human reason as such, but a special gift given of God to enlighten the darkness, and strengthen the weakness of our rational faculties, I have no controversy with them, but this, that I esteem it highly necessary that in all they write or speak, they take special care to preserve that distinction, otherwise they will be in danger, lest, instead of serving the cause of Christianity, by coming as near as possible in expression to the opposers of it, they strengthen them in their opposition to divine revelation.

It is well known what mischief a pretence to reason has done to revealed religion; and therefore it is on all hands safest to keep to those forms of sound words, by which the Holy Ghost in the scriptures expresses this principle, where it is spoken of in such variety of significant words, as fully declare its properties and operations for the great end for which it is given. And not in compliance with the present fashionable modes of expression, give the enemies of divine revelation occasion to believe, that as they are one with
 them

them in their new forms of speaking, they are also one with them in their new way of thinking.

But to return to our author, I would not be understood, by what I have last advanced, to charge him with a design to favour the cause of deism; for I believe that was no part of his design: but on the other hand, I cannot see what service his thus writing can prove to the promotion of true Christianity in the world. But for those others professing themselves Christians, to represent that holy principle, which the scriptures so plainly bear testimony to as a special gift of God, as the same thing with human reason, is to strike at the root of the Christian Religion, and is the very spirit of deism: for if there is no such gift now given of God, to help the weak depraved faculties of our minds, to work out our salvation, (which, without doubt, have as much need of it now as ever they had) will not the deists tell you, *that therefore there never was any such thing*; and consequently, all the pretence of those who writ the scriptures, and preached the gospel in the primitive times by the help of it, is a delusion. The most solid answer to which objection, is, *That we therefore believe there was such a principle in the primitive times, because we know something of it in our own experience at this day.*

Hence it follows, that those who are so freely charged with deism, for maintaining the spiritual part of the Christian Religion, and asserting the universality and sufficiency of an inward divine principle unto salvation, are the closest opposers of deism, and the strongest advocates for Christianity, seeing they oppose the one in the root and foundation of it, which is human reason; and defend the other in the spirit and power of it, by which it has an immediate influence on the minds of men, for their sanctification and salvation, with-

Out which the best precepts (and such no doubt are the precepts of the Christian Religion) would not effectually answer that end. Hence it also follows, that the controversy between the Christian and Deist, does not turn upon this point only, *viz.* The truth of the external, historical parts of Christianity, and the facts which relate thereto; but also, the truth of the internal, practical, experimental part, without which the great end of Christ's coming into the world, which was the reformation of mankind, cannot be completely answered.

If this were not the case, the belief of what Christ did and suffered in his outward appearance, would prove of no advantage at all to mankind; for he did not come into the world, and suffer death, to purchase a privilege of sinning with impunity, but to procure remission of sins upon condition of repentance, conversion, and amendment of life, and not otherwise; and to lay the whole stress of Christianity on the external facts, excluding, or at least slightly passing over, the internal fruits and effects, as no essential part of it, is in reality to make void the whole, as to any good mankind may receive from it. And therefore, he that will defend Christianity thoroughly, must take in every part of it: and this all true Christians, such whose religion stands on the true original bottom, will do: these, though they distinguish between the outward and inward appearance of Christ, it is not with design to oppose the one or the other, or to make void the good ends and effects of either, but to give both their proper place in the great work of salvation: the one, as that by which remission of sins is procured; the other, as that by which sin itself is actually destroyed, and a virtuous religious conversation brought forth, beyond whatever appeared
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among any sect of philosophers, or the adherents to any other system of religion and morality. Which leads directly to an easy solution of our author's grand objection against the experience of sanctification by the spirit of Christ, being the principal evidence of the Christian Religion, or indeed any evidence at all: we have it, p. 198.

" But since according to the doctrine of the leading Quakers, the spirit of Christ within is universal, and belongs to heathens in common with Christians, and since some of those Heathens are allowed to lead good and pious lives, it is evident that such an inward experience cannot be a proper proof, much less the principal evidence of the truth of Christianity, since such an experience is common to moral Heathens and Christians; for notwithstanding the piety and good morals of conscientious heathens, they may justly be supposed to be intirely ignorant of Christianity, and the facts that support it." The same he has repeated, p.

202. " The experience of sanctification (that is) in other words of piety and good morals, considered as habitual in men, cannot justly be supposed to prove the truth of Christianity; since Heathens, Mahometans, and Jews, may be men of piety and good morals, who, notwithstanding, as they are of those denominations; cannot with any propriety be said to embrace Christianity." Again, he repeats it, p.

205. " Such an experience within cannot be a criterion of the truth of Christianity, since it may be equally pretended to by a person who is not a Christian. For instance, by a Mahometan in favour of the truth of the Alcoran itself; if that Mahometan be supposed to be a person of piety and good morals; and such a supposition is not unreasonable, and therefore

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“ an argument, which, being admitted, would
 “ prove the truth of the Mahometan religion
 “ cannot possibly be supposed to be the princi-
 “ pal proof of the truth of Christianity.” To all
 which it may be answered,

Though it is not denied, that there were men of piety and good morals among Heathens and Mahometans, yet their being such is no proof of the truth of the heathen idolatry, or Mahometan superstition, as sanctification, through the spirit, is a proof of the truth of Christianity: for the piety and morality of these has not the same relation to their particular systems of idolatry and superstition, as the sanctification of the Christian has to his religion. Piety and purity are a part of the Christian Religion truly such, and an essential constituent part too, and inseparable from it. But the case is widely different with the Heathens and Mahometans; the virtues of these are so far from having any relation to their particular systems of idolatry and superstition, that the rites and ceremonies of the heathen, in their pretended worship of their gods, were many of them inconsistent with true piety and morality; some of them absurd and ridiculous, some cruel and inhuman, some lewd and obscene, and therefore acted in secret, because they would not bear the light. Now what relation has piety and morality to all these, as a proof or evidence of them? So far from it, that the virtues of the heathen were rather a constant testimony against them, as being inconsistent with such wild practices. And therefore we find the best writers of morality among them, say least of their religious rites and ceremonies, but dwell on such topics as relate to virtue and vice, intrinsic good and evil, and the tendency of these to the happiness of mankind, or the contrary; nay, Socrates for that very reason,

viz.

viz. for refining too much on the point of virtue and morality, and at the same time not sufficiently recommending the religion in vogue, was exposed to ridicule, tried and condemned as a contemner of the gods. And as he applied philosophy to the regulation of life, so he died in support of that good cause.

As to the virtues of the Mahometans, whatever of that appears in any of them, can have no relation to their being of that sect, nor be any proof of the truth of their superstition; because as all is derived from Mahomet, who, it is well known, was so very far from a pious virtuous person, that few exceeded him in acts of wickedness of the worst kinds; the virtues of any of his followers cannot be attributed to them as such, (for it is impossible to conceive, that such an evil tree can bring forth good fruit) but to that general principle of virtue implanted in all mankind, which discovers to them the beauty and excellency of it, and prevails on some to put it in practice.

But the stress of our author's objection lies in this, as he himself farther insists on it, p. 213. " That good moral heathens, who according to " them have the light within, and therefore have " that common grace, have likewise within them " the principal evidence of the truth of Christian- " ity; and consequently, are to be considered as " Christians, and capable of salvation as such, " even whilst they are heathens. But surely such " a supposition destroys itself, and is too absurd " to be admitted.

Answ. If the piety and virtue of the heathens were in all respects the same with the piety and virtue of the Christians, and these last had no peculiar advantages which rendered their morality more perfect and extensive than that of the heathen,

then, by which it might be distinguished from it; then I confess this objection would have some foundation, and these fruits and effects, however good, would not be such an evidence of the Christian Religion as is contended for: but this is not the case. For though it is not denied that the heathen had a law written in their hearts, which was such, that those that sinned against it, persisting in that state, should perish; and those that lived in conformity to it, were, in their so doing, justified in the sight of God, as having done their duty according to that light and understanding it pleased God to give them; and that according to their obeying or not obeying this law, they will be acquitted or condemned in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ: all which is clearly set forth by the apostle, Rom. ii. from ver. 6. to 16.

And again, though it is not denied, that there are to be found in the writings of some of their philosophers, particularly Plato and his followers, and also their poets, some expressions which carry in them strong indications of a divine illumination, (of which our friend Robert Barclay has given several instances) as without doubt, he that is the God of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews and Christians, has left no part of his intelligent, rational creatures, without a witness or testimony of himself, both inwardly in their minds, and outwardly in the works of creation and providence. I say, though these things are acknowledged, yet it must also be acknowledged, that there are many advantages peculiar to the Christian Religion, which to those who sincerely apply themselves to the right use and improvement of them, become in a more evident explicit manner the ground of a virtuous pious life, than that of the heathen. So that it may be said in the words of the apostle,
Rom,

Rom. iii. 1, 2. with a little variation of the terms, *What advantage hath the Christian? Or what profit is there in the outward profession of Christ? Much every way; chiefly, because unto them are committed the holy scriptures, the written oracles of God:* in which are delivered those true grounds and reasons of a Christian faith, and as a fruit of that his practice, that those that apply themselves to it, by the help of that spirit of power, and faith in it, there recommended, have a greater assurance of success in the work of sanctification and holiness, than ever the heathen, under their circumstances, had or could have: and this being found to answer that great end in our own experience, becomes the principal evidence of the truth of Christianity, as before observed.

For what ground of faith and practice had these, that can be compared with that great and miraculous event, *The resurrection of Christ from the dead*, and our being assured that a measure of the same spirit and power by which that was effected, is given to those that believe in him, in order to raise them to newness of life? This therefore the apostle thought necessary to preach to the Athenians, that learned refined people among the Heathen, in order to the effectual work of their repentance and conversion: though it is observable, that notwithstanding their skill in philosophy and natural science, he seems to have made the fewest converts there of any place where he laboured; but instead of that, some mocked, and others said, We will hear thee again of these matters.

Upon the whole, though I will not deny that the heathens might have faith, such of them as attended to that inward word of faith, which was in them and in all men; yet there is a manifest difference in degree between their faith and that
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of the true Christian : the one having relation to God according to those inward and outward manifestations he was pleased to make of himself. The other besides this, having also relation to Christ, whom God has sent forth to be the propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood : and also, to be a sanctifier and complete Saviour : agreeable to that distinction and admonition of our Lord, *Ye believe in God, believe also in me.*

And indeed, however it may be the case of some of the heathen, that they believed in God, and in those discoveries he was pleased to make to them of himself : and this might be a foundation of moral virtue in them ; yet it was not the case of the heathen in general. On the contrary, Tully, whose philosophical tracts are an epitome of their writings, resolves all into nature, and the faculties of our own minds : it being a common maxim with him, that to live well is to live agreeable to nature, to follow nature as the best guide of life ; and particularly in his Tusculan questions, lib. 3. "*Ita fit ut animus de se ipso tum judicet, cum id ipsum quo judicatur ægrotet.*" Thus " it comes to pass, that the mind then judges of " its own case, when that very thing by which " this judgment is made, is distempered." Again, lib. 4. "*Corporum adjumenta adhibentur extrinsecus, animorum salus inclusa his ipsis est.*" The helps for bodies are applied from without ; " the relief of souls is within." Which with me, I confess, is an insuperable difficulty, viz. That that very thing, which is itself distempered, should, when such, reduce itself to a sound state, in that very case in which it is distempered ; nor does it all help the matter what that learned heathen adds afterwards, viz. "*Itaque bene adhibita ratio cernit quid optimum sit, neglecta multis implicatur erroribus.*" Therefore reason, rightly used, dis-

" cerns

“cerns what is best; but neglected, is entangled
 “in many errors.” For as by reason he means
 human reason, the difficulty still recurs: this is
 that distempered part, which itself wants a cure.
 The only way to solve this difficulty (at least as it
 appears to me) is, carrying on the analogy; that
 as the distempers of our bodies are cured by the
 proper application of bodily remedies from with-
 out, which are suited to their natures; so the dis-
 tempers of our minds are only thoroughly cured
 by the application of spiritual remedies agreeable
 to their nature. What are these? An inspiration
 of new thoughts, a new understanding, new judg-
 ment of things, and new desires, new purposes
 and resolutions raised and strengthened, and by
 degrees perfected, and brought into confirmed ha-
 bits, which could never be brought to pass, if the
 mind under the power of vicious habits, confirmed
 sometimes by long practice and the deceitful plea-
 sures that attend them, was left to itself. And
 therefore, to render this work successful, it is ne-
 cessary men should set about it under the conduct
 of a superior power, which is sufficient to master
 all these difficulties; and this can be nothing else
 but God himself, by some kind influence on the
 minds of men for these purposes; or at least some
 spiritual agent of a superior nature and power to
 us, acting under his direction. Any other way of
 curing the distempers of the mind, *viz.* by a
 power merely human, must be attended with great
 uncertainties and imperfections, as having no
 fixed point to stand upon, but running round in
 a circle: and whatever remedy we assign for such
 a cure, itself wants a cure; and whatever medium
 we assume for proof of such a thing, itself still
 wants a proof; which is plainly a defect in that
 wise Roman’s argument last cited, as might be
 easily shewn.

But

But because this way of writing concerning the weakness of human nature, and the necessity of a divine assistance for helping its imperfections, is not pleasing to a set of men of late sprung up amongst us, who esteem it a debasing of it, and are very fond of a state of self-sufficiency and independency, which renders all religion, and the particular care and providence of God over mankind, a thing useless and insignificant; a notion in the highest degree blasphemous, and consequently, extremely disgusting to religious minds: as if the great and all-wise Creator had formed mankind such as he is, and turned him a drift into a world of difficulties and temptations, and left him to himself to steer his own course, without taking any farther care of him. The very mentioning of which one would think enough to refute it. However, because this is a certain consequence of some persons notions, carried to their full length, I shall add in confirmation of what has been already advanced in opposition to these pernicious tenets, the authority of one of the best writers of this age, and a stronger advocate for reason in religion, than any other of these late pretenders to it: I mean the learned sagacious author of *The Religion of Nature delineated*, p. 22, 23. “ They
 “ who place all in following nature, if they mean
 “ by that phrase acting according to the nature
 “ of things, (that is, treating things as being
 “ what they in nature are, or according to truth)
 “ say what is right, but this does not seem to be
 “ their meaning; and if it is, that a man must
 “ follow his own nature, since his nature is not
 “ purely rational, but there is a part of him which
 “ he has in common with brutes, they appoint
 “ him a guide which I fear will mislead him:
 “ this being commonly more like to prevail than
 “ the rational part. At best this talk is loose.
 And

“ And upon the words [*follow his own nature*] he
 “ has this marginal note, *Vivere ex hominis naturā.*
 “ Cic. It is true he adds, *Undique perfectā & nihil*
 “ *requirente.* But those words have either no
 “ meaning, or such as will not much mend the
 “ matter. For what is *Natura undique perfectā*
 “ *& nihil requirens?* (implying there is no such
 “ thing) Besides, moral religion doth not consist
 “ in following nature already perfect, but by the
 “ practice of religion we aim at the perfecting
 “ our natures.” If so, then it must be done (say
 I) by the help of something distinct from, and
 superior to our nature, which he also acknow-
 ledges, as may be clearly gathered from p. 95. to
 110. where he treats of providence under the
 distinction of general and particular providence;
 having first asserted the general superintendency of
 the Divine Being over the several parts or species
 of beings in the creation, he argues with great
 modesty and strength of reason, beginning at p.
 98. for the possibility of a particular providence,
 or that which respects principally particular men,
 and that not only over their bodies, but minds al-
 so. Upon this last he expresses himself thus, p.
 105. “ It is not impossible, (for this is all I
 “ contend for here) [*though he carries it farther*
 “ *afterwards*] that many things may be brought
 “ to pass by means of secret and sometimes sud-
 “ den influences on our minds, or the minds of
 “ other men, whose acts may affect us.” P. 106,
 he pursues the same topic thus: “ I say these
 “ things, and such like may be; for since the
 “ motions and actions of men, which depend on
 “ their wills, do also depend on their judgments,
 “ as these again do upon the present appearances
 “ and non-appearances of things in their minds;
 “ if a new prospect of things can be any way pro-
 “ duced, the lights by which they are seen al-
 P “ tered,

“tered, new forces and directions impressed upon
 “the spirits, passions exalted or abated; the pow-
 “er of judging enlivened or debilitated, or the
 “attention taken off, &c. Then new volitions,
 “designs, measures, or a cessation of thinking
 “may also be produced, and thus many things
 “prevented, that otherwise would be, and many
 “things brought about that would not.” These
 things he asserts may be produced several ways,
 the last in these words: “They may be caused
 “by the suggestion and impulse, or other silent
 “communication of some spiritual being, per-
 “haps the Deity himself; for that such imper-
 “ceptible influences, and still whispers may be,
 “none of us all can positively deny, that is, that
 “we cannot know certainly that there are no
 “such things. On the contrary, I believe, there
 “are but few of them, who have made observa-
 “tions on themselves, and their affairs, but must,
 “when they reflect on life past, and the various
 “adventures and events in it, find many in-
 “stances, in which their usual judgment and
 “sense of things cannot but seem to themselves to
 “have been over-ruled.” Again, p. 107. “That
 “there may be possibly such inspirations of new
 “thoughts and counsels, may perhaps farther
 “appear from this, that we so frequently find
 “thoughts arising in our heads, (more properly
 “in our minds) into which we are led by no
 “discourse, nothing we read, no clue of reason-
 “ing, but they surprize, and come upon us from
 “we know not what quarter. If they proceeded
 “from the mobility of spirits, straggling out of or-
 “der, and fortuitous affections of the brain, or
 “were of the nature of dreams, why are they not
 “as wild, incoherent, and extravagant as they
 “are? Not to add, that the world has generally
 “acknowledged, and therefore seems to have
 “experienced

“ experienced some assistance and directions given
 “ to good men by the Deity.” I pass by what he
 writes of beings superior in nature to us, who he
 supposes may be ministers of God’s providence
 under him: and shall only add what he writes on
 this subject of providence, p. 109 & *seq.* “ We
 “ may be sure he regards every thing as being
 “ what it is, and that therefore his laws must be
 “ accommodated to the true genius’s and capa-
 “ cities of those things which are affected by
 “ them. The purely material part of the world
 “ is governed by such laws as are suited to a
 “ state of a being which is insensible, passive on-
 “ ly, and every where and always the same, and
 “ these seem to be simple and few, and to carry
 “ natural agents into one constant road. But in-
 “ telligent, active, free beings, must be under
 “ government of another form. They must
 “ (truth requiring it) be considered as beings,
 “ who may behave themselves as they ought or
 “ not, as beings susceptible of pleasure and pain,
 “ as beings, who not only owe to God all that
 “ they are or have, but are or may be sensible of
 “ this, and to whom therefore it must be natural
 “ upon many occasions to supplicate to him for
 “ mercy, defence, direction, assistance. Lastly,
 “ as beings, whose cases admit of great variety,
 “ and therefore that influence, by which he is pre-
 “ sent to them, must be different from that, by
 “ which gravitation and the common phænomena
 “ are produced in matter. This seems to
 “ be as it were a public influence; the other a
 “ private, answering private cases and prayers.
 “ This to operate directly upon the body; the
 “ other more especially upon the mind, and up-
 “ on the body by it.”

By this time, I believe, it appears plainly,
 what this worthy author’s judgment is, respecting

a particular providence over the minds of men, as well as their bodies, and that the thing is possible and rational. Which I hope will be a means to rescue the doctrine of a divine influence on our minds, from that load of reproach, which is generally cast upon it. But he comes closer to the point in the next page, where he argues, (speaking of a particular providence in the foregoing sense): "If there may be one, it will unavoidably follow that there is one, because in the description of providence, p. 95. nothing is supposed with respect to particular cases, but that they should be provided for in such manner as will at last best agree with reason. And to allow that this may be done, and yet say it is not done, implies a blasphemy that creates horror. It is to charge the perfect being with one of the greatest imperfections, and to make him not so much as a reasonable being." (A very just consequence) and therefore he rightly concludes, "That it is as certain that there is a particular providence, as that God is a Being of perfect reason. For if men are treated according to reason, they must be treated according to what they are: the virtuous, the just, the compassionate, &c. as such; and the vicious, unjust, cruel, &c. according to what they are, and their several cases must be taken and considered as they are, which cannot be done without such a providence."

All which, rightly considered, I think amounts to a clear demonstration; first, that human reason, as such, is defective; and secondly, that to supply that defect, to rectify the mistakes our imperfect reason is liable to, a particular providence, consisting in a secret influence over the minds of men, as well as a care over their bodies, is not only possible, but actually so. And that
this

this particular providence is the only rational foundation of religion and worship towards God, and of the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, which have such a connection with the belief of a particular providence, that if the one be admitted, the other must be admitted also; if the one be denied, the other cannot be supported; they stand or fall together. And in this respect, the author last mentioned, though he professes to confine himself to the religion of nature, founded on reason, and the truth of things, yet has in that way far outdone Cicero and the ancient moralists; and no wonder, having the assistance of the holy scriptures, which these wanted. Which are yet more clear and explicit in this doctrine of an inward, divine influence on the minds of men, as a principle of faith, not of nature.

The apostle, Rom. x. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. calls it expressly the word of faith, for thus he describes it: *The righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring Christ down from above? Or who shall descend into the deep, that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead? But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart, that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the tongue confession is made unto salvation.* Upon which it may be observed, first, that the gospel righteousness is the fruit or effect of faith, and that this faith hath for its foundation, *the resurrection of Christ from the dead*; which being an eminent act of divine power, properly denominates the righteousness produced in this way,

God's righteousness. By which it is not only distinguished from the righteousness or morality of the Heathen, but that of the law of Moses, which having no such foundation, the apostle calls their own righteousness; for speaking of the Jews, ver. 3. He says, that *they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, grounded upon a power merely human, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God, grounded upon a power divine.* That this is the sense of this passage, I am persuaded will appear to any one that reads it with due attention, and compares it with other parts of the same epistle, and elsewhere, where the apostle often mentions the resurrection of Christ by way of analogy, drawing a resemblance between the quickening and raising Christ from the dead, and the raising men up from a state of sin, which is often called death, to a life of righteousness; and therefore it is necessary farther to observe, that this faith, grounded on the resurrection of Christ, is not a bare belief of that great event, (for many believe it, or pretend so to do, who are far from that state of righteousness which the Christian religion requires) but together with that, a receiving and believing in the same spirit and power by which our Lord was raised up, in order to be quickened and raised to newness of life, which the apostle in the 8th chapter makes absolutely necessary to the forming a true Christian life; for he tells them, ver. 8th, in express words, *Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his;* and then proceeds, ver. 9, and 10, &c. *If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life, because of righteousness. But if the spirit of him which raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his spirit that dwelleth*

dwelleth in you. Here is a plain analogy between the inward death of the soul by reason of sin, and the outward death of Christ for sin ; and the inward quickening or enlivening both of soul and body to righteousness, and the outward raising of Christ from the dead by the same power. That this was the true design of the apostle, and that no other construction can be put on his words, is yet more evident, if possible, by the following verses, viz. 11; 12. *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors not to the flesh, to live after the flesh.* Therefore (which connects it with the former verses) seeing we have such a powerful aid and assistance, we are debtors, we are under the greatest obligations, by the help of it, not to live after the flesh in the sinful lusts of it; *For if ye live after the flesh, (being favoured with a power to overcome it) ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live; for as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God.* The great John Locke agrees in this interpretation, to whose paraphrase and notes on the place the reader is referred: as also to other passages of the apostle Paul to the same effect, such as Eph. i. 19, 20. Col. ii. 12, 13. and Rom. vii. 4.

To return therefore to the matter which gave occasion for this short dissertation, it appears I hope, by this time, that the Christian life, and that piety and morality which is proper to it, has many peculiar advantages beyond that of the Heathen, consisting in a clear explicit revelation of a divine supernatural aid and assistance, which the Heathen had not in that evident express manner as the Christian; the experience of which makes it, to all those that receive and believe it, a very powerful effectual principle of virtue and righteousness, exceeding that of the law of Moses, or

that of the Heathen. For the weakness and imperfections of both these are thoroughly made up and supplied by that divine word which was in the beginning, and by which all things were made, in which was life, and that life was the light of men. This word is a certain cure for all the maladies of the mind, it searches the wounds, whatever they be, to the bottom, finds out the cause, and applies an effectual remedy to the distempers of it. The author to the Hebrews, under the influence, no doubt, and in the certain experience thereof, gives this elegant description of it, chap. iv. 12, 13. *The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Nor is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight, but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.* Which cannot be understood in any other sense than an inward immediate discovery made by God to man, in the secret of his heart, of the very intents and purposes of it, to separate the good from the evil, the precious from the vile, and to save the soul that believes in it and obeys it from the power of the one, and preserve it in the love and practice of the other: here then is a fixed point, in which all our religious searches and endeavours center, not the mind distempered, as it is to cure itself, but a stedfast faith and trust in God, for wisdom and power from him, by virtue of this inward, lively, active word, given for that end. Beyond this nothing can be expected, or is wanted, did men but believe in it, and obey it, to complete the happiness of mankind: and no system of religion or morality, besides the Christian, so evidently discovers or reveals it. For although
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this gift is universal, and all men have it, and those in all ages and nations, who truly fear God and work righteousness, they do so by the help of it. Yet to the Heathen it is *as a light shining in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not*, they do not certainly know it to be what it is: but to the Christian, truly such, it is *a light shining out of darkness*, discovering itself to be the grace, or gift of God, for the saving the soul. Which is one difference between the piety and morality of the Christian, and that of the Heathen, and shews a manifest preference of the one before the other.

Another distinguishing character of the Christian morality consists in the wonderful success and blessed effects which it produced in the reformation of mankind, beyond any system of philosophy among the Heathen, or all of them taken together; both in the real conversion of men from evil to good, and the number of such converts. Upon which I would observe, that the ancient Heathen may be considered under two classes; the one of the most barbarous and inhuman kind, such were the inhabitants of these northern countries, and particularly the old Britons, whom the poet calls *Britannos hospitibus feros*, which is generally understood to imply, that they offered human sacrifice, and exercised that cruelty on strangers. It is certain they were both as to religion and morality extremely savage, as were also the inhabitants of the more southern climates, such as the Egyptians, of whom another poet gives such a dismal account, as is shocking to persons of common humanity, and much more to religious minds. And therefore there can be no competition between them and the Christian, but Christianity is a very great reformation from this darkest side of paganism, and
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an inestimable blessing compared with such inhuman usages.

The only question then lies between the Christian and the politer part of the Heathen, *viz.* The ancient Greeks and Romans, among whom it is confessed, that there were those that taught good rules of virtue, and some of them practised them; and it is not my design to derogate from the just credit which belongs to any of them: however, it will not debase them at all to say, that there are much better rules of life to be found in the holy scriptures, especially the New Testament. But this is not all I aim at in this place, but to shew the superior excellency of the Christian Religion from the great success it had, and the blessed effects it actually produced in the reformation of mankind, in turning multitudes from the evil of their ways, wherever it reached, in the first publication of it, and in all places since, where it has prevailed in its original purity and simplicity, (for this is what I always mean by the Christian Religion). And that much beyond any effects that could ever be ascribed to the doctrines of any of the philosophers, or all of them together.

For proof of this, there is no need to dip much into the Heathen or Christian history; it is certain that the moralists among the Heathen, whatever good rules and precepts of life they delivered, yet they stuck to the religion of the time and place where they lived, which was polytheism and idolatry.

It was the first precept of Pythagoras, in his golden verses, *to worship the gods according to the law.* And Cicero, the greatest among the Latins, after having told us, *that those who assert the being of the gods, are at such variety and disagreement among themselves, that it is troublesome even*

even to reckon up their opinions about it, which one would think should have led that discerning Roman into the consideration of one God, as the shortest and surest way to get rid of that trouble: yet, instead of that, he proceeds to enumerate most of the sentiments of the Greeks relating to their gods; many of them extremely absurd, and often contradicting each other; and though he reprehends most of them for some peculiar absurdities, yet agrees with them in the main, in asserting a plurality of gods, and attributing to the many those acts of providence, &c. which only belong to the one true and living God. This was the case of the Heathen moralists in general.

On the other hand, the Christian Religion, when it first appeared in the world, was in a constant testimony against these absurd contradictory sentiments, for which, the publishers and professors of it were exposed to the severest persecutions, often to death itself, in a very cruel and inhuman manner, as may be seen in the histories of the persecutions, &c. in the first three centuries; which yet they endured with a courage and constancy more than human; till at last they so overcame by patient sufferings, that Heathenism, with all its idolatrous rites and appurtenances, was gradually extinguished in a considerable part of the world, and the belief of one God introduced and established in the room thereof: which must be allowed to be of itself a very great reformation, and such as the Heathen moralists were so far from effecting, that they never attempted it.

But this was not all the fruit mankind reaped by the Christian Religion, for they were as much reformed in practice, as they were set right in judgment, by that remarkable change that appeared every where among those that received the truth

truth of the gospel in the love of it; such as was never known to be the effect of any doctrine published by the Heathen moralists. I cannot better express these excellent fruits of the faith of the gospel compared with the success of the Heathen moralist, than in the words of the great Dr. Stillingfleet, in his *Origines Sacrae*, lib. 2. chap. ix. sect. 23. "Of all the success of the gospel, that, upon the hearts and lives of men deserves the greatest consideration. The great efficacy and power of the gospel was abundantly seen in that great alteration which it wrought in all those who were the hearty embracers of it. The philosophers did very frequently, and deservedly complain of the great inefficacy of all their moral precepts upon the minds of men, and that by all their instructions, *Politiora non meliora ingenia fiunt*. Men improved more in knowledge than goodness." And having spoken of the great design of the gospel, and of the efficacy of its doctrine out of the scriptures, he tells us, "That which manifests the exceeding great power and excellency of the gospel was, that it not only turned men from one way of worship to another, which is a matter of no great difficulty, but that it turned men together with that, from their lusts and sensuality, to an holy and unblameable life. For men being more in love with their sins than their opinions, it must needs be a greater power which draws men from the practice of habitual sin, than that which makes them change their opinions, or alter the way of worship they were brought up in; this is that which Origen against Celsus triumphs in, as the most signal evidence of a divine power in the doctrine of Christ," (then it seems it was the principal evidence with him) "that it wrought so great an alteration on all
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“ that truly embraced it, that of vicious, de-
 “ bauched, dissolute, it made them temperate,
 “ sober, religious. And then comparing the
 “ Christian churches of that age with other po-
 “ pular assemblies in the same places, and shewing
 “ their great preference, he [Origen] concludes,
 “ How can it be but rational to adore the divi-
 “ nity of Jesus, who was able to accomplish such
 “ great things, and that not upon one or two,
 “ but upon such great multitudes as were then
 “ converted to the Christian faith? We read of
 “ one Phædon, and one Polemon, brought from
 “ their debaucheries by Socrates and Xenocra-
 “ tes; but what are these compared with those
 “ who were turned from their sins to God by
 “ the gospel of Christ?”

Again, “ Lactantius excellently manifests, that
 “ philosophy could never do so much good in the
 “ world as Christianity did, because that was not
 “ suited at all to common capacities, and did
 “ require so much skill in the arts to prepare
 “ men for it, which it is impossible all should
 “ be well skilled in, who yet are as capable of
 “ happiness as any others. And how inefficacious
 “ the precepts of philosophers were, appears from
 “ the philosophers themselves, who were far from
 “ having command by them over their master-
 “ less passions, and were fain sometimes to con-
 “ fess that nature was too headstrong to be kept
 “ in by such weak reins as the precepts of phi-
 “ losophy were. But then, what great command
 “ divine precepts have upon the souls of men,
 “ daily experience shews. And proceeds by a
 “ citation out of Lactantius, to shew the remark-
 “ able alteration which was in any who became
 “ true Christians. That although they were pas-
 “ sionate, covetous, fearful, lustful, cruel, un-
 “ just, vicious, yet, upon their being Christians,
 “ they

“ they became mild, liberal, courageous, tem-
 “ perate, merciful, just, and unblameable. Which
 “ never any were brought to by mere philosophy,
 “ which rather teaches the art of concealing vi-
 “ ces than of healing of them, and concludes :
 “ but now when Christianity was so effectual in
 “ the cure of these distempers which philoso-
 “ phy gave over as beyond its skill and power,
 “ when it cured them with so great success, and
 “ that not in a Paracelsian way, for them to re-
 “ lapse afterwards with greater violence, but it
 “ did so thoroughly unsettle the *Fomes morbi*, that
 “ it should never gather to so great a head again ;
 “ doth not this argue a power more than philo-
 “ sophical, and that could be no less than a
 “ divine power, which tended so much to reform
 “ the world, and to promote true goodness in
 “ it.”

Thus far Dr. Stillingfleet ; upon which I would
 remark, that the testimonies of Origen and Lac-
 tantius, which he chiefly insists on, next to that
 of the holy scriptures, are the more to be regard-
 ed, because they lived in the early ages of Chri-
 stianity, and did not write of things at a distance,
 but what passed in their own times, and the age
 immediately preceding them, which was next to
 the apostles, for Origen was born in or about the
 year of Christ 185, and died in the year 254.
 Lactantius lived somewhat after him ; and there-
 fore what these writ must be taken for the state of
 Christianity in the first and purer ages of it, and
 shews what it was capable of doing, and actually
 did, in answering the great end of its institution,
 the reformation of mankind, beyond any other system
 of religion or morality. And indeed, while the
 Christian Religion stood on its true original bot-
 tom, viz. *Faith in the operation of God by his spirit*
for the saving of the soul, there was reason to ex-
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pect this success from the nature of the thing, and in fact it did appear among the converts and professors of it, in a very general and remarkable manner, much more so than could possibly be expected from the feeble efforts of human reason without this assistance.

I hope by this time the reader sees clearly the difference between the sanctification of the Christian, and the piety and morality of the Heathen: and that though it is not denied, that there were some pious virtuous persons among the latter, yet the distinction between the virtues of these and the Christians, was visible and obvious, and therefore does not at all hinder this from being an evidence of the truth of Christianity; for which reason, the author I am concerned with, must excuse me, if I say, he is in the wrong, and dangerously so, in writing of this great and only principle of true Christian knowledge, and right Christian practice, in such contemptible terms as I have before observed, and particularly confounding the fruits and graces of the spirit of Christ, in which alone that sanctification which is peculiar to a Christian consists, with the piety and morality of the Heathen, as if they were the same things or not easily distinguishable: the contrary of which I hope the unbiassed judicious reader is fully sensible of.

Nor does it help him at all what he writes, p. 198. " Sanctification indeed by the spirit is acknowledged by all true Christians, and particularly is so in the liturgy, articles and homilies of the church of England, as well as their great original the New Testament." For to what purpose serves this acknowledgment, if it bring forth no other or better fruits than the Heathen. But the articles of the Church of England plainly distinguish, not only between the
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works of the Heathen and Christian, but between those of one Christian and another, *viz.* the regenerate and the unregenerate; the first as proceeding from the inspiration of the spirit of Christ, they declare to be acceptable to God; but the last, as not being wrought according to his will, whatever appearance of good they may have, they declare not pleasing to him, for which see article, 12, 13.

The articles and homilies, as well as some passages in the liturgy, are plainly calculated to establish the necessity of assistance from God by his spirit, for working such works as are acceptable to him, in opposition to Pelagianism, and agreeable to the doctrines maintained in these considerations. But all the writers of that church do not come up to the sense of these articles in this point, of which this author has given us a small specimen, p. 203, in these words: " Surely
 " the grace of God was never wanting in some
 " degree to favour those in any age of the world,
 " who exerted their hearty endeavours to be good
 " and virtuous." Where he makes men's hearty endeavours to be the first step to their becoming virtuous in a Christian sense, and the grace of God upon that to favour them. Whereas, according to the doctrine of the apostle, and the truth of the case, the grace of God exciting those hearty endeavours, is the first mover, and these endeavours follow the motions of it, and act by faith in its power, and under its direction; *for it is God that works in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure.* It is by this, and not any endeavours of theirs, however hearty, that sinners are first awakened and called out of their sinful state unto repentance, and being obedient to this call, by the same they are sanctified, and being sanctified,

fied, by the same they are *justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the spirit of God.*

It is not the acknowledgment or profession of these things that avails unto salvation, but the certain knowledge and experience of them. And the great complaint which is now justly to be made against the professors of Christianity is, that these things both in their writings and preachings, are either passed over in silence, or very slightly touched upon; whereas in truth and reality, they are the most substantial part of Christianity, in which all the benefits of it are rightly conveyed to us.

But I expect it may after all be asked, *What does this inward experience, or testimony of the spirit prove? Is it a proof of the inspiration and authority of the scriptures, or of their right interpretation?* This our author declares to be weak and absurd: "For as to the inspiration of the scriptures, it is to be considered as a fact in question, and therefore is to be proved by proper testimonies of a fact, which can be only external; namely, the declared sentiments of the primitive Christians, and the constant tradition of the catholick church for near seventeen centuries; after so many ages the pretence of the spirit within to prove an ancient fact comes surely too late. And indeed it is highly unreasonable in its own nature, unless it be confirmed without by miraculous facts," p. 199.

Dr. Burnet, in his exposition of the 6th article of the church of England, has an objection of the same nature in these words, p. 79. "I will not urge that of the testimony of the spirit, which many have had recourse to. This is only an argument to him that feels it, if it is one at all; and therefore it proves nothing to another person; besides, the utmost that can be made

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“ of this, is, that a good man, feeling the very
 “ powerful effects of the Christian Religion on
 “ his own heart, in the reforming his nature, and
 “ calming his conscience, together with those
 “ comforts that arise out of it, is convinced in
 “ general of the whole of Christianity, (then this
 “ may be an evidence of the truth of it to him
 “ that feels it) by the happy effects it has upon
 “ his own mind; but it does not from hence
 “ appear, how he should know that such books,
 “ and such passages in them, should come from
 “ a divine original: and that he should be able
 “ to distinguish what is genuine in them from
 “ what is spurious.” And then proceeds to arguments of another kind, *viz.* from the history of the first ages of Christianity, to defend the canon of scripture now settled.

To the like purpose the author under present consideration objects, p. 205. “ Whatever may
 “ be pretended to be felt within, as an effect of
 “ the operations of the spirit, cannot be proved
 “ to others without, who may doubt of it; since
 “ they can judge of nothing but what is visible,
 “ and what may not arise, as hath been intimated,
 “ from other principles; and consequently
 “ such an inward experience of sanctification, as is
 “ pleaded for, cannot possibly be the principal
 “ evidence of Christianity, as being confined to
 “ the breast of him that experiences it.”

This objection, with the former part of Dr. Burnet's, and some others that might be mentioned of the same nature, does not at all affect my argument, seeing I no where place the evidence of the Christian Religion arising from the work of sanctification, as that work is confined to the breast of him that experiences it, but as diffusing or manifesting itself in fruits agreeable. For as the works of the flesh, which are wicked, are manifest;

nifest; so the fruits of the spirit, which are good fruits, are equally manifest. And where any man, or number of men, who were in a remarkable manner under the power, and in the practice, of wicked works, become changed into a contrary course of conversation, by receiving and believing in the spirit of Christ, these give the best testimony, not only of the truth, but of the power and efficacy of the Christian Religion. And I may venture to appeal to the unprejudiced part of mankind; whether if this were generally the state of the professors of Christianity, *viz.* That they were evidently the better for their religion, it would not be the shortest and surest way to stop the mouths of gainfayers and opposers.

Which also easily solves another objection of this author, in these words, p. 204. " Mr. A. cannot be secure upon his principle of being imposed upon by fancy and imagination, instead of the immediate revelation and inward sealing or testimony of the spirit, unless it be attended with miraculous effects, as in the apostolical age."

This is an objection of a very peculiar kind, and would admit of some satirical reflections; but I shall content myself with saying, Certainly a man is in no danger of being imposed on by fancy or imagination, when he finds a real, not imaginary, change in the frame and disposition of his mind, which was once under the power of vicious habits, but is now delivered from that power, and takes a much more solid real pleasure in doing good, than once he did in doing evil; the pleasures of which last he now sees were indeed but imaginary and deceitful. Let him try how to reconcile this way of writing with the articles of the church of England, and particularly the 13th.

But to return to that part of the objection which relates to the scriptures.

I am sure of this, that I have no design in what I have already, or am about to advance to lessen the authority or usefulness of the holy scriptures; on the contrary, I freely declare, that what has been now and formerly writ by me, I received the first hints of in reading those sacred writings. To come then to the point, our author tells us, *The inspiration of the scriptures is to be considered as a fact in question, and therefore is to be proved by proper testimonies of a fact, which can be only external; namely, the declared sentiments of the primitive Christians, and constant tradition, &c.* And not to insist that our author here sets tradition above the scriptures, as making it the only proof of them: I allow that these are proper testimonies. But of what? Why of this, That those books and epistles which are said to be writ by the four evangelists, and by the apostles of our Lord, were really writ by them, and are no forgeries; of which Dr. Burnet and others have collected undoubted testimonials. But that those books contain matter of divine revelation, the proof of this must arise from other topicks, viz. The peculiar excellency of the doctrines and precepts therein contained, and the remarkable influence which these had on the lives of those that believed and received them, beyond those of any other dispensation, either to Jews or Gentiles; which was owing principally to the spirit of Christ, which they that believed in him received: so that, as has been already observed, they not only were turned from one profession to another, but of sinners became saints. And this was not only the case of the first converts to Christianity, but is the case of all true Christians in all ages; for true Christianity is not one thing at one time, and another

another thing at another time, but the same at all times, (however men by their inventions and traditions have made it seem to differ). In short, it is a standing permanent revelation for the ends and purposes before expressed, which so immutably belongs to the nature of it, that it cannot subsist without it, or be separated from it. For it was always true, since it was spoken by him that cannot lie, *This is life eternal to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent* : and that this saving knowledge comes by revelation, particularly immediate revelation ; *For no man knows the Son, but the Father, neither knows any the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.*

The author to the Hebrews, speaking by way of comparison between the legal and evangelical covenant, plainly expresses it, chap. viii. ver. 10, 11. *This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days (saith the Lord) I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least to the greatest.* Which shews not only the universality of this knowledge, according to the peculiar design of the gospel, but the nature of it, viz. That it consists in having the law of God put in our minds, and written in our hearts, and in this sense he would be to them a God, and those that obeyed his laws so inwardly written should be to him a people : and farther, on this condition he tells them, ver. 12. *I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities I will remember no more ;* or in other words, *Their former sins shall be remitted for Jesus Christ's sake.* Now I say, in this sense the gospel

is a standing perpetual revelation, and declared so to be under various forms of expression in many places in the New Testament ; which is not at all inconsistent with the real use and benefit of the holy scriptures, or any other external helps, but is that alone which renders them rightly serviceable : for it is this inward law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, in every particular man's breast, which rightly applies the doctrines and precepts contained in the scriptures, to their particular edification ; not every man left to himself to apply them to himself, which too many attempting to do, wrest the scriptures to their own destruction ; but by bringing such parts of them to their remembrance, and in a close particular manner manifesting to them that this is their present state and circumstance. These inward discoveries of the spirit of Christ answering the outward records of the experience of holy men in the primitive times, as face answers face in a glass : or in the words of the * learned Dr. Stillingfleet, where he declares, that “ God has
 “ promised his spirit to be a witness within them,
 “ (believers) that by its working and strength-
 “ ening grace in their hearts, it may confirm
 “ to them the truth of the records of scripture,
 “ when they find the counterpart of them written
 “ in their hearts by the finger of the spirit of
 “ God.”

In short, the revelation I have been contending for cannot but confirm the truth of the revelation of the holy scriptures, as well as help to a right interpretation of them in such points as are necessary to be believed and practised, in the nature of the thing ; because the spirit of Christ, wherever it is, (and according to the tenor of the

* Orig. Sacrae, lib. 2, cap. 10. sect. 5.

new covenant it is in all Christians) cannot deny its own, but according to the good ends for which it is given, it must confirm the truth of the doctrines, and help to a right understanding and application of them, and quicken and strengthen the powers or faculties of the mind to the practice and precepts contained in these sacred writings. If this were not so, the Christian Religion, notwithstanding the excellency of its doctrines and precepts, would be a dispensation in nature and kind the same with the law of Moses, *viz.* weak and unprofitable, for want of that inward help and assistance which alone can render it effectual. It would be a body of the best doctrines and precepts that the world was ever blest with, but without a spirit, a picture or resemblance of good things, but not the things themselves.

I do not assert, as Dr. Burnet expresses it, That it would always appear by this means, how a man should know that such books, and such passages in them, came from a divine original; or that he should be able always to distinguish what is genuine from what is spurious: nor does it appear to me in all cases necessary. It is but a very small part of the writings of the New Testament that has ever been called in question, and the controverted passages in other books not so many, but that the necessary doctrines of the Christian Religion are sufficiently plain to a well-disposed mind, in those books and passages that were never brought into question. And if these things were never so well digested, it would not satisfy men of perverse, contentious, disputing spirits. The main point therefore, is to seek after this good, honest, sincere disposition of mind, which, in whomsoever it prevails, will induce him that has it to believe the holy scriptures to

contain matter of divine revelation, even though he were not capable of himself to find out the points in dispute, or had not read the learned dissertations of others on that subject; which however I do not at all despise, where there is leisure and capacity for it; which I mention, that neither the reader, nor the author I am concerned with, may suppose that my design is in any respect to derogate from the virtue and authority of the holy scriptures, or any thing tending to support and defend it. But I am very free to declare, as to myself, that one great reason and ground of my belief of them is, that I think I see evident marks of a divine original, even in the matter of them; which has made me admire at the conduct of this author and divers others, who have writ in defence of Christianity, for putting such a slight on its precepts, as an evidence of the truth of it; as p. 204. where he tells us, " That though good and holy precepts are
 " a great advantage to the cause of Christiani-
 " ty, yet they do not strictly demonstrate the
 " truth of it, either in themselves, or in their
 " influence on the lives of men; for a good sy-
 " stem of morality may be supposed to be form-
 " ed without divine revelation." And Dr. Conybeare, who in general reasons very closely and justly in defence of our holy religion, yet in this case must excuse me if I dissent from him, p. 431. 2d edition of his *Defence of Revealed Religion*, has these words, viz. " Strictly speaking there can
 " be no internal evidence of revelation at all.
 " For I would desire to know, what can be con-
 " cluded from the nature of any doctrines or pre-
 " cepts delivered? Why this only, That they are
 " either true or false; and if true, that it must
 " be the will of God they should be received as
 " such. Be it so, yet doth it follow from hence
 " they

“ they must therefore be revealed ? No, certainly.
 “ ly. Several of the same points which are in-
 “ culcated in the gospels, are contained likewise
 “ in the writings of the philosophers. The in-
 “ ternal evidence of their truth must be the same
 “ in both. But were they equally revealed to
 “ both kinds of writers ? No, the one learned
 “ them from divine revelation, the other from
 “ principles of human reason. The one produce
 “ full proof of a divine commission, the other al-
 “ ledge nothing of that kind at all ; upon this
 “ I must affirm, that external proof is the only
 “ direct evidence of a revelation, and that all con-
 “ clusions drawn from the nature of the several
 “ doctrines or precepts, amount to no more than
 “ a condition, or *Causa sine quâ non*, as being that
 “ without which no external evidence should be
 “ admitted.”

To the same effect Dr. Rogers before quoted, and some others.

Though these objections do not directly oppose my argument, because I no where assert, that good and holy precepts, either in themselves, or in the influence they have on the lives of men, do strictly demonstrate the truth of Christianity ; for I place the evidence not in the influence which the precepts have, but in the influence which the spirit of Christ the author of those precepts has on the lives of men by quickening and enlivening the faculties of the mind, that they may obey those precepts. The precepts, how good soever without this, would not (as being only written) have that influence on the lives of men, as it appears they had among Christians in the first ages of Christianity, and would still have, did men truly believe them. But though it be thus, yet I cannot with Dr. Conybeare say, *That the doctrines and precepts are no evidence at all.* This

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is putting an absolute negative upon them; for though he supposes without proof, that a good system of morality may be formed without divine revelation, yet I deny that there ever was or can be such a system of morality formed, as will any wise conduce to the great ends of religion without a divine revelation; and though several of those points that are inculcated in the scriptures, are contained likewise in the writings of the philosophers, as the Doctor says, yet they are not all contained in them. And I would add, there are much better rules of life, more closely adapted to the rooting out vice in the first conception of it, and implanting and cultivating virtue in the very ground of it, *viz.* the inmost thoughts and intentions of the mind; and this in a steady uniform manner pursued, throughout the writings of the New Testament, than can be found in the writings of the philosophers. And shall this manifest preference intitle the doctrines and precepts of Christianity to no place at all, as an evidence of its divine original? Is it not as rational and conclusive to argue for the truth of the religion from the real goodness of it, as from the greatness of that power by which it was ushered into the world? Is not the first as much an undoubted attribute of God as the last? And consequently when exerted in an extraordinary manner, as much an evidence of the truth of any religion, as his power when extraordinarily exerted? And if so, do not these writers take away one great support of the Christian cause, by denying positively, that there is any internal evidence of it at all, and that these are only a condition, or *Causa sine quâ non*? Whereas they are in truth an essential part of our holy religion; and to argue for the truth of it from hence, is to argue directly from the effect to the cause.

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As to what the last mentioned author has writ, that because several of the same points that are inculcated in the gospels, are contained in the writings of the philosophers, therefore the internal evidence must be the same in both: he has effectually confuted himself elsewhere, when arguing very justly on the imperfections of the law or religion of nature, he tells us, speaking of the writers of morality, p. 48. "However valuable
 " a collection may possibly be made from the
 " writings of several authors, yet no complete
 " and unexceptionable system hath been offered
 " to the world by any one of them." And p. 50. he refers to the Bishop of London, who (as he says) has proved, "That even the philosophers,
 " who carried matters of a religious or moral
 " nature to a great height, have yet in several
 " particulars been ignorant, uncertain, or mistaken:" for which see his sentiments at large in his *Second Pastoral Letter*, from p. 16. forward; where he has made a considerable collection of the absurd sentiments of the heathen moralists.

However, I would not be understood to detract from the just esteem which is due to the writings of the heathen moralists; but on the contrary, as in some points they agree with the sacred writings, so there is good reason to believe, that those of them who were truly sincere in their search after truth in matters of a moral nature, it pleased God to favour them with divine illuminations on these points.

Having considered this author's most material objections which concern the doctrine advanced in my considerations, as an evidence of Christianity, I shall close it with some general observations upon the whole.

I have already taken notice, that he no where charges me with an error in doctrine, but with
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laying too great stress on the inward spiritual part of the Christian Religion, labouring that point rather much. On the other hand, it appears to me that he is mistaken, in laying too little stress on that part of our religion, speaking of it in terms too diminutive and contemptible. How far the first belongs to me, is referred to the reader's judgment upon the serious impartial perusing of what I have writ on the subject. Though if it be thought necessary, I freely make this profession in conjunction with my brethren, *That remission of sins, and all the gifts and graces of the spirit of Christ, as repentance, sanctification, justification, and salvation, are the fruits and effects of his death, suffering, resurrection, mediation, and intercession.* Having made this declaration, I cannot, I presume, lay too great stress on the inward spiritual part of religion, because though a general foundation was laid for all these blessings by the outward coming of Christ, yet they are conveyed and applied to particulars only through this medium: so that instead of doing any thing to the prejudice of the outward coming of Christ, it is the only way to render it effectual, for all the good ends and purposes of it. And it may be justly said in the words of the apostle in another case, *Do we make void the coming of Christ in the flesh by faith in his inward and spiritual appearance?* Nay, *but we establish it*; because all the benefits of what he did and suffered in that appearance become ours: that is, operate to our salvation, only by this means: whereas those who magnify and exalt in words the great and good things which our Lord Jesus Christ did and suffered in that outward appearance, but speak of this inward and spiritual work in such uncertain terms as this author, and many others; though they seem to honour him in words, yet in truth dishonour

dishonour him, by making void, so far as by their means this inward work is slighted and disregarded, the salutary effects of all that he did and suffered for mankind in the flesh.

For these reasons I take the liberty to request this author to review his performance, and consider seriously what service it can possibly produce to the cause of religion, to tell the world, speaking of the work of sanctification, *That one cannot be secure from being imposed on by fancy and imagination*, with more to the same effect already taken notice of: and particularly in several places, as p. 202, and 203. calling it *the ordinary graces of the spirit*, to distinguish it from the *extraordinary* in the ages of the apostles. And as to that distinction, if by extraordinary gifts he means the gifts of miracles, I acknowledge they are so far extraordinary, that it has not pleased God to give them but very sparingly ever since the primitive times: but as to the gift of the spirit for the opening our understandings in a certain and sensible manner, into the necessary truths of religion, both relating to faith and practice, and moreover for the call, qualification, and exercise of a true gospel ministry, and the profitable administering other external helps to the church of Christ, I know no difference there ought to be, whatever in fact there is, between one age and another, it being essential to the very being of a Christian church, and therefore equally necessary at all times. And if so, no matter whether we call it ordinary or extraordinary, seeing it is the same now it was at first: though in my judgment it were much the best to leave out both these epithets, as having no foundation in the holy scriptures; because the one carries in it the idea of so near an affinity with the ordinary operations of our own minds, that as our author says, *It may*

*may be thought not easy to distinguish the one from the other, and therefore few will be at the pains, or think it worth their while to endeavour it: and the other carries the mind to the idea of something so far at a distance, and above its reach, that a man will be ready to conclude, that it does not concern him; though in truth it does concern all men, but in a more especial manner all that name the name, or make profession of Jesus Christ. It must however be confessed with sorrow, that this gift of God, as to the saving work or operation of it, is too much neglected among the professors of Christianity: the true reasons of which is, not that *his hand is at all shortened that it cannot save, or his ear heavy that he cannot hear*, but in general, *the iniquities of men have separated between God and them; and their sins have hid his face from them*, more especially the sin of unbelief, respecting this excellent gift; men wilfully refusing to hear and obey the testimonies which the holy men of God in the scriptures bear unto it, or the invitations of those that have known something of the effectual work of it, or the silent still small voice of it, in their own breasts. For which reason, as formerly he did not many mighty works among a people because of their unbelief, so now he does not those good works in them and for them, which otherwise he might do.*

And as this is the main ground and reason of that great decay and degeneracy from true Christian piety and purity, *viz.* men's departing from, slighting or disregarding, this divine principle or gift of God; so the chief end and design of my first appearing in this manner, and continuing so to do, was and is a sincere endeavour, if by any means I might be instrumental to stir up the pure mind in the professors of Christianity, by putting
 them

them in remembrance both from what root their great loss and decay has sprung, and by what means alone the Christian Religion can possibly be restored to its original purity and excellency, that by a holy life, agreeable to its pure precepts, they may shew forth the praise of him that has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light; which would go a great way to stop the mouths of gainsayers and infidels, who, as *they speak against you as evil-doers, will then be ashamed, when they behold your good conversation in Christ Jesus.*

As this is the great thing that is wanting among the professors of Christianity, I take the liberty to expostulate a little with them. Would we secure the Christian Religion in the most effectual manner from the attacks of deists and infidels? the best evidence of the truth of it being the blessed effects that it produces in an holy life and blameless conversation of those that profess it, let us therefore shew forth the power and virtue of it in such a conversation, *Let every soul that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. It was to redeem us from this, and to purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works, that Christ gave himself for us. He was manifest to take away sin, for in him there was no sin, to destroy the works of the devil.* Let not Christians then build again that which Christ came to destroy; if we do this, the unbelievers, though they are doing the devil's drudgery themselves, will reproach us with it, and charge Christianity with that weakness and impotency, or even with that wickedness and impiety, which in truth is owing to men's neglect and disregard of it, and following the devices and desires of their own corrupt hearts. Let us give that evidence of the power and virtue of Christianity, which our Lord himself recommended, viz. *By this shall all men know that you are*
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my disciples, if you love one another, but if we bite and devour one another, there is the greatest danger that we be consumed one of another; at least this is certain, that we weaken the hands one of another, and thereby expose the common cause of Christianity the more effectually to be destroyed by its professed enemies. And in an especial manner let us remember, that upon the principles of Christianity and sound reason too, we cannot produce those effects, cannot either forsake the evil or do the good, cannot love one another with that true Christian charity or love, which is the perfection of all virtue, of ourselves; it is not in him that walketh to direct his own steps, but a good man's steps are ordered by the Lord; Without him (Christ) we can do nothing; through him strengthening us, we can do all things. Let us therefore apply ourselves with all humility of heart and spirit by faith, that he would *grant us according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man.* It is by this inward principle alone, that we are enabled to produce these excellent effects, which if it did not immediately illuminate and strengthen the mind, all external helps and evidences would not sufficiently answer that end.

Upon the whole, the excellency of this evidence above all others, consists in this, That at the same time it assures us of the truth of the Christian Religion, and produces the blessed effects of it; whereas it is possible, and is actually the case of many thousands, to believe the truth of it upon external testimonies, and contend for it too, and be so far from feeling these good fruits and effects brought forth, that many of such are as great slaves to their vicious appetites and inclinations, as others who do not so believe. And to carry the argument yet farther, men may profess

feels to believe in this inward principle, and assent to it in theory, and yet be never the better for it, unless they sincerely cleave to it in heart and spirit with full purpose of mind to follow its leadings. The Christian Religion is not a religion of notion only, but a religion of practice brought forth from an inward spring of love to God and man, an heart purified and sanctified by the spirit of Christ, from whence good works as naturally flow, as fruits spring from their proper tree: *Make the tree good, and its fruit will be good.* In short, the religion of the gospel is in this respect the perfection of all that ever was or can be said of religion, and as such, carries its own evidence in it to well-disposed minds, and by the good fruits it brings forth in these, it gives the strongest evidence to others. By these it is, that *their light so shines before men, that they see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.*

An improvement of this sort among Christians, would be the most effectual means to establish in the hearts of men a belief of the Christian Religion, as the contrary has given the greatest advantages to its adversaries; for which reason, I would recommend to the professors of it under all denominations, that they turn the edge of their zeal this way, to destroy wickedness, root and branch, and that each party abate somewhat of that warmth with which they treat each other, for the sake of some doctrines and principles peculiar to themselves, some of which perhaps have no direct relation to the grand affair of salvation. The truths which relate to that are few and plain, and such as all may very reasonably agree in: this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*: to which if we add from the same in-

spired author, *that they that believe in Christ, ought to be careful to maintain good works.* This will go a great way to make up a complete creed for a Christian. These truths are worthy of all acceptation; none can be excused from them, who would expect to be called by that honourable appellation. And therefore the same apostle to Timothy adds, *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord* (a very solemn way of charging) *that they strive not about words to no profit, to the subverting the hearers.* This strife about words, as it has been managed among Christians, has in former ages, as well as in this wherein we live, tended very much to eat out the vitals of Christianity, which is love; and if that be destroyed, it is not very material what men believe or profess. If that be preserved, though they may differ in some less material points, they will be on all hands the more open to conviction, and ready to give and receive instruction when attended with evidence. And by this means truth and sound judgment in all necessary points will be the most likely to take place, there being nothing which tends to enlighten the understanding more than such a good disposition; as, on the contrary, nothing darkens it more than the want of it.

I have been led into this way of writing, esteeming it seasonable, according to the present state of religion among us, and the conduct of the several contending parties towards each other, particularly from the consideration of that unkind usage my brethren, the people called Quakers, have met with from some late writers, the author I am concerned with among others, and that without any just occasion administered on our part; in which, though I have little cause of complaint against him myself, observing that he has treated me

me with particular marks of regard, more so than some others whom I greatly prefer before myself, and I hope I have been, and shall be preserved, within the limits of a suitable decorum towards him: yet I cannot separate myself from my brethren, to whom I esteem myself joined *in the unity of the spirit*, which is *the bond of peace*, a bond of a more sacred nature than any external obligations or constitutions whatsoever; but must esteem myself with them unkindly treated by this author.

In order to prove this, I shall compare his conduct with that inviolable rule of equity our Lord has laid down, as the best criterion by which mankind ought to judge of their own conduct, and others judge for them of theirs one towards another, viz. *Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*. I take it, that all men are by nature equally intitled to the equity of this rule, and under the indispensable obligation of it. Not any supposed superiority of one above another, not because one is a member, or perhaps a Bishop of a church established by law, is he therefore exempted from the observation of this rule towards a society of Christian people only tolerated by law? One man ought not to look upon another man, or society of men, as so far beneath him, but that he should put himself in their place in all his actions towards them, and bring all to this test, viz. *How should I approve of this conduct, were I in their circumstances, and they in mine?*

I am sensible, that though this excellent rule of action belongs equally to all mankind, yet this author has in effect excluded the Quakers from a share in the benefit of it, which is one just matter of complaint against him, by representing them in such terms; that if true, place them on a dif-

ferent bottom from all others, on account of their pretence, as he calls, to infallibility; for which reason he would have it: "It is in vain to argue with them upon any supposed errors they may be thought chargeable with, and therefore they are not upon equal terms with others who have no such pretence." P. 194. he tells us, "Errors may be excused with a better grace on the principles of human frailty in writers that are confessedly fallible, (meaning those of the church of England) than in those that pretend to be infallible, (meaning those of the Quakers). There is a great disparity in these two cases." The best answer which can be given to this misrepresentation of the Quakers principles, in my judgment is, by truly stating and settling the idea of the term *infallible* as professed by the Quakers; by which it will appear, that they do not appropriate it to themselves exclusive of others, nor to any in such manner as to create such disparity as is pretended.

The people called Quakers believe, and I hope it has sufficiently been proved in the course of these considerations, *That the spirit of Christ, in its illuminations and discoveries to the mind of man, is the most certain principle of knowledge in matters spiritual and religious, that ever was given to mankind.* And as this in the nature of the thing must be supposed *infallible*; so if we suppose any person constantly for any given time acting under its direction, that person is so long and so far infallibly directed. And I make no question, but this has been the case at times of some good religious persons, who have believed in it, and carefully kept upon their watch attending it; not only among the Quakers, but among other societies of Christians. But as this requires a very constant dilligent attention and watchfulness, so
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for want of this, too many of those who at times have been preserved in soundness of judgment, and purity of heart and practice too, have at other times been liable to errors and miscarriages in both these respects. And therefore, in general, men are more or less fallible or infallible, liable to errors or not, in proportion to that diligent watchfulness, joined with humble prayer to God, or neglect of those duties which they are from time to time bound in. So that it is not an absolute personal infallibility, but conditional, not placed in men, but in the spirit of God, and in men, so far as they are under the guidance of it; which the Quakers and all true Christians plead for: and to divest Christian men of such an infallibility, is to divest them of all certainty in religion, and lands them directly in that most miserable dark state, scepticism. And that this is what the Quakers pretend to, our author has confessed, p. 195. " Though it must be acknowledged that others of them, and particularly William Penn, as cited above, who have maintained the immediate operation of the spirit within them, have not therefore pretended to be always infallible." He introduces this with an assertion, which I deny to be true; and presume he will never be able to prove, *viz. ibid.* " The plea too of the majority of the Quakers is notoriously a false consequence; namely, that because they pretend to have a spirit within them that is infallible, they themselves always have the infallibility of it." Which is so far from being the sense of the majority of the Quakers, that I believe it will be difficult for him to produce one instance of it in the terms he has expressed it. I will not deny, but that some of them, in some particular cases, may have declared, that they believed themselves at a certainty, or,

which is in effect the same, infallible. But that any have affirmed, that they were always, and in all cases so, (however in general favoured with divine illuminations) remains to be proved.

The truth of the case is, what he has so cautiously and sparingly acknowledged of William Penn and others, is the true sense, not only of the majority of the Quakers, but of the body of that people, agreeable to the idea of that word before settled. And if our author will say, in the abundance of his humility, that he is never at a certainty, or, which is the same, infallible; as this will add but very little credit to any thing he may say or write, so he would thereby place himself in the same state of disparity, not only towards the Quakers, but all men in their senses, as these would do towards all others, should any particular persons of them presume to declare themselves at all times and in all cases infallible, (though in general we ought to believe such an attainment possible, and in that faith humbly press after it). But the true medium between these extremes, in which all men, more especially Christians, are concerned, is, that they are so far infallible, or at a certainty, as they find themselves under the certain clear conviction of that infallible principle which is given to teach them all things, to lead them into all truth, and no farther. Which puts the Quakers, in conjunction with all others, upon a bottom of rational conviction, and gives them an equal right with others, to be treated according to that rule of our Lord before mentioned.

Having thus cleared the way, I proceed to shew, that the people called Quakers have been treated by their adversaries, and particularly by this author, not upon that equal bottom which this excellent

cellent rule prescribes; but as if they alone were to be singled out as persons exempted from the equity of it. In order hereto, let it be remembered, that this controversy first arose from a charge which the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry made against the Quakers, and which this author has undertaken to vindicate, first in general, p. 3. "That the Quakers (without distinction) have been so far deluded, as to lose the belief of a real external Jesus by the Christ within them, and the literal resurrection of the former by the spiritual and moral one of the latter; an error that is expressly condemned by St. Paul." And lower, he charges George Fox, and other heads of the Quakers, "That they allegorized away the letter of the New Testament, by opposing, or at least preferring, a spiritual or inward Christ, to a literal, historical, and outward Jesus," &c. Here the terms are somewhat softened, as also where he says, *ibid.* "I am far however from condemning the Quakers as Deists; since many of that sect have been, and no doubt now are, well meaning, though ignorant persons, that have been imposed on by their leaders: but I cannot acquit the founders and heads of that sect from having been Deists in an allegorical disguise." From this latter way of writing, one would think his design was to distinguish particular persons from the body of that people; and let only those whom he supposes concerned take the blame of his charge, and the society become acquitted of it. But notwithstanding he several times, in the progress of his performance, keeps up this distinction; yet at last, from p. 208 to 213, he makes the whole society chargeable with these supposed errors, unless they come into his measures;

fures ; that is, that as a society, by some act of their yearly-meeting, or otherwise, they publickly retract the supposed errors of their predecessors ; which he insists very strenuously upon for several pages. So that now the charge is transferred from particulars to the general, from a part to the whole. The reasonableness of which, so far as affects the general body of the Quakers, can rise from no other foundation, that I can at present think of, than this, That universally in all Christian societies or churches, whatever errors any particular persons are guilty of, the whole church is guilty of, unless they purge themselves of them by some publick act, as suppose the church of England by some act of convocation, the Presbyterians by some act of a general synod, &c. If this be not as true when applied to all other societies as to the Quakers, but that it is reasonable to expect it from them, but they have no reason to expect the same from others ; then the golden rule is broken, *Whatsoever ye would, &c.* For the errors of others continued in, may as truly be supposed to affect the Quakers, as the supposed errors of the Quakers may affect them. But if it be applicable to all societies alike, then I think it must be allowed, all societies are alike chargeable with error, so far as any particular members are erroneous, and they may say to each other, *Let him that is without error cast the first stone* ; it will be prudent therefore in that case, to forbear charging one another so liberally with what they are in some sort guilty of themselves.

But I shall proceed to prove, that it is equally unreasonable to charge these errors of allegorizing away the letter of the New Testament on the particulars, so that there is the less foundation for loading the society with it : and that in accusing the Quakers of this, they have not given them
neighbour's

neighbour's fare, have not acted towards them as they have acted towards others. It may be remembered, that Woolston, in endeavouring to maintain his allegorical scheme, has made many quotations out of the Christian fathers in favour of it, as he supposed. His opposers, on the other hand, laboured to rescue those authors from such an imputation, by palliating their expressions, and giving them a different turn from what he (Woolston) gave them; or by shewing that though in some parts they writ in an allegorical stile, yet in others they plainly acknowledged the external facts in a literal sense, the miracles of Christ in particular, as well as all others.

The Bishop of London has contracted this part of the controversy which the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry, with others, have treated at large; therefore I take the liberty to borrow a few passages, in order to set this matter in a true light. In his first Pastoral Letter, p. 28. 2d edition, he expresses himself thus: " Some of the fathers indeed in their explications of scripture to the people, of which their sermons in those days chiefly consisted, being willing to use all means, and to omit no opportunities, of exciting in them a spirit of piety and devotion, did not confine themselves to the bare letter, but endeavoured, upon the foundation of the letter, to raise spiritual meanings, and to allegorize upon them by way of moral application, and this not only upon the miracles of our Saviour, but upon almost all the historical facts, which are recorded either in the Old or New Testament, and the same was also a received method among the Jews. But would he have us suppose, that the primitive fathers intended to deny the literal facts of our Saviour's miracles, or to make them merely allegorical, when he has not produced

" duced any one authority out of the whole body
 " of the fathers of the first three hundred years
 " after Christ, except Origen, that can be pre-
 " tended to countenance his excluding the literal
 " sense? He has indeed heaped together a num-
 " ber of quotations, chiefly out of the fathers
 " and writers of the fourth, fifth, and following
 " centuries; but many of the passages he quotes,
 " either expressly affirm, or evidently suppose the
 " literal truth of our Saviour's miracles. And
 " others of them tell us, that we must not rest in
 " the letter, but endeavour to find out mystical
 " and spiritual meanings. Now as such quota-
 " tions are far from denying the truth of our
 " Saviour's miracles according to the letter, they
 " can be of no manner of service to his cause,
 " and therefore it is hard to say, for what end
 " he produced them, unless it was to amuse his
 " English readers with the appearance of a great
 " variety of authorities, which he must needs see
 " were nothing to his purpose."

I would request the author I am concerned with,
 to apply this sober reasoning to his controversy
 with the Quakers, as also what follows relating to
 Origen, *ibid.* " As to Origen himself, though he
 " went farther into the allegorical way than any
 " other, yet so far was he from not believing and
 " allowing our Saviour's miracles in the literal
 " sense, that in many parts of his book against
 " Celsus, which consists not of popular discourses,
 " but of just and sober reasonings, he directly ar-
 " gues from them in defence of Christianity."
 And then having spent two pages in quotations
 out of Origen against Celsus, to prove that he
 believed the miracles of Christ in a literal sense,
 because he argued for them in defence of Chri-
 stianity, he concludes, p. 31. " Judge now
 " whether Origen ought to be produced as one,
 " who

“ who did not believe the miracles of Christ ac-
 “ cording to the literal sense, and as full and
 “ proper testimonies of the truth of the Chri-
 “ stian Religion. And let this instance convince
 “ you, how unsafe it is to take the opinion of the
 “ fathers, or of any other writers, (then of the
 “ Quakers say I, as well as others) from the par-
 “ ticular passages and expressions which may be
 “ picked out of them, without attending to the
 “ occasions upon which they were written, or
 “ comparing them with the other works of the
 “ same authors. A liberty which has been much
 “ used of late, (by none more say I, than by the
 “ writers against the Quakers) and if allowed,
 “ would put it in the power of designing men,
 “ to make almost any writer speak what opinion
 “ they please.”

Upon which give me leave to observe. Is this
 a just way of reasoning in defence of the ancient
 fathers? And is it not equally so in favour of the
 Quakers? Without doubt it operates alike in fa-
 vour of both, if it be alike applicable to both.
 And that it is so, will appear by considering
 wherein there can be any disparity that will ex-
 clude the one more than the other. If there be
 any such, it must arise from one or other of these
 causes, that is to say, either that those expres-
 sions quoted from the writings of our friends
 are not capable of any other construction or ex-
 planation, from what goes before or after: or,
 that there are no passages in any other parts of
 their writings which mention their belief of the
 external facts of Christianity in a literal sense, by
 which these more obscure places may be explain-
 ed: or, that they are not sincere in making pro-
 fession of such a belief.

As to the first, it has been already done by our
 friend Joseph Bessé, in his appendix to his an-
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swer to Patrick Smith ; wherein the most material passages relating to the first class of testimonies produced in the Bishop's vindication, are cleared from the imputation laid on them, to which appendix the reader is referred.

I doubt not, but the like might be done with regard to the other classes. But as it was not my design to publish a particular answer to the whole, but only, or chiefly, to such parts which concerned the exceptions against my considerations, I do not think myself obliged to proceed to particulars. But keeping to the method proposed, I say, that supposing there were some passages in any of our former friends' writings, which at first sight seem not to express the doctrines and facts relating to the external parts of Christianity, so fully and clearly as they might ; if the same authors have in other parts of their writings expressed themselves clearly and fully as to their belief of them, shall we take the first to be their only real belief, and the last a fiction ? Or rather, is not the last to be taken for a just explanation of the first ? This is a proper way of proceeding in defence of the ancient fathers as before quoted ; why does it not take place in like manner in defence of the Quakers ? I can account for the different treatment of the one and the other, upon no other bottom, than a resolution by all means possible to defend the one, and at all events to make the others offenders, contrary to equity and common justice. That there are in our accused friends' writings, such passages, and in great numbers too, which plainly express their belief of the external facts of Christianity, if our author puts me upon it, I undertake to prove by a sufficient number of instances. But he himself has partly saved me the labour, by acknowledging it with respect to some, and also with respect to the general

ral body of our friends, as expressed in the yearly-meeting epistle of 1731, and divers others of our yearly-meeting epistles. But neither these, nor those plain confessions of faith delivered to the legislature upon several occasions, and accepted by them; nor any thing else done by them, are satisfactory, it seems, without a public particular retractation. Upon which I request him to consider, if such a retractation were the indispensable duty of the Quakers, it would be also the duty of all other societies under the like circumstances; supposing for instance, that some of the chief of the first reformers, who were in the main, no doubt, very good and pious men, had been mistaken in some particular points; or, rather suppose they differed from their successors in judgment, without meddling which was, or was not in the right: is there no excuse, but their successors must publicly retract their supposed errors, and thereby condemn those who suffered martyrdom for the reformation, as erroneous, and that after their death? This, I think, would be both unchristian and unjust, yet a task of this nature they would impose upon the Quakers.

Whatever this author's sentiments are of the first preachers among that people; those that look upon them with an impartial eye know, that they were instruments in the hand of God, to turn many to righteousness, by *turning them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God*; as appeared in that remarkable change in conversation among those who were convinced of the truth, (for so I must call it) by their preaching. And though he is pleased to rank them with Familists, and such like people of ranting, enthusiastical principles; it is well known, that by that wisdom which was given them of God, a church or society was gathered into that good order and whole-

wholesome form of discipline, which has preserved them in a good degree—a people of one heart and one way to this day, though not without some difficulties from various causes, when those others, *viz.* the Ranters, who pretended to be above such wholesome rules, are come to nothing; and were always, whenever they had opportunity, particularly and strongly opposed by the people called Quakers.

And though I make no comparison between these and the first reformers, but leave the readers to think of that as they are disposed; yet thus far I am free to declare as my real sentiments, that as the departing from the divine principle which the primitive Christians and first Quakers believed in, was the ground of those innovations and gross corruptions, which gradually creeping into the Christian church made the reformation necessary; so the returning unto it, believing in it, keeping close in spirit to it, walking in it, is the only way to render that reformation perfect, which was so happily begun, and which all true Christians earnestly wish for. And I request this author seriously to consider, whether he contributes to this good work, or the obstructing of it, by representing the operation of this principle as such an uncertain, and consequently, unprofitable thing.

It is out of question with me, and I doubt not with many others not under our name, that one view these persons (the first preachers among the Quakers) had in their exposing themselves to those difficulties and sufferings as they did in that day, was a sincere attempt to reform mankind by the only means by which they can truly be reformed. And if in the progress of this good work, being strongly attacked on all sides with furious adversaries, as well as unchristian persecutions, they

they had dropt some expressions which wanted explanation, is there no allowance to be made for those strong and almost constant pressures of mind and body they were under? May it not reasonably be accounted for, how persons under these circumstances, and some of them men of little or no literature, may not always write with that nice distinction, as to satisfy curious or captious readers? Some of whom, if an expression is capable of several meanings, will not fail to give it the worst, without regard to the particular occasion, or other parts of the same author. Again, is there not a regard to be had to the times and seasons of writing as well as speaking? For instance, when the internal part of the Christian Religion is fallen into contempt and disuse, and all the stress of our salvation is laid upon what Christ had done and suffered in his outward appearance, and that men by the imputation of his righteousness, through faith in him, are said to be actually justified in the sight of God whilst remaining sinners: is it a crime at such a time to preach the necessity of repentance and conversion, of holiness and sanctification, and that without it no man shall see God? And as this is the work of the spirit of God upon the hearts of men, if in the prosecution of this good design, the principal thing recommended is that part which was most neglected, and perhaps a just reproof placed on those, who under pretence of exalting Christ's righteousness, and depressing men's, slighted one essential part of his religion to exalt another; may it not justly at such a time, and on such an occasion, be not only excusable, but necessary?

That there is such a distinction to be made of times and occasions, I beg leave once more to cite the Bishop of London, in his second Pastoral Letter, p. 64. where all that I have said in behalf
of

of the Quakers, is with some variation applied by him to the writers of the church of England about the time of the restoration, in these words :

“ It may not be improper, before I shut up this
 “ head, to observe, that several of our most
 “ eminent divines, after the restoration, set them-
 “ selves, both by preaching and writing, to en-
 “ large upon the importance of moral duties,
 “ and to recommend them with great earnest-
 “ ness to the regard of the people, to such a de-
 “ gree, as to stand charged by others with too
 “ great a disregard of the doctrines and duties
 “ peculiar to Christianity. Whereas the case in
 “ reality was this; during the times of confusion,
 “ many of the preachers had not only forbore to
 “ inculcate the duties of morality, but had la-
 “ boured to depreciate them, to persuade the
 “ people that faith was all, and works nothing.
 “ And therefore, the clergy, after the restoration,
 “ in order to take off those unhappy impressions,
 “ found themselves obliged to inculcate, with
 “ more than ordinary diligence, the necessity of
 “ moral duties in the Christian life, and to la-
 “ bour to restore them to their proper share in
 “ the Christian scheme. But those of them, who
 “ with the honest view I have mentioned, la-
 “ boured the most zealously in that way, were
 “ at the same time as zealous to explain to the
 “ people the great work of our redemption by
 “ Jesus Christ, as the means of salvation which
 “ God has appointed.” After which he quotes
 some passages, or the substance of them, out of
 Drs. Tillotson, Barrow, and Scott, to the pur-
 pose last mentioned.

Upon which I take the liberty to observe, that
 this whole passage in the reason and substance of
 it, is as truly applicable to the Quakers, as to
 the writers he mentions: they were engaged in
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the same work for the same reasons; though in a different manner, and with a different success. For (to mention nothing but what is known to every one) it is certain upon the restoration, that oppression which the members of the church of England suffered being removed, when, according to reason it might have been expected, they should have expressed their thankfulness to God, by an humble, virtuous, religious walking; instead of that, such a flood of licentiousness, intemperance and profaneness, started up in court, city, and country, that the extraordinary diligence which these divines used, with an honest intention no doubt, could not stem the tide, but things grew worse, till at last it came to the most unnatural, unchristian persecution, that was ever known in any Protestant country. Which I do not mention to cast a reflection on the church of England as now constituted, believing that the prevailing governing part of that church at this time are ashamed of the cruelty of their predecessors, and averse to such a practice: but to shew, that these labours, however well intended, had not their desired success.

On the other hand, the Quakers, though under the utmost discouragement, and severest persecutions, wherever they prevailed, not only turned men from one profession to another, but a visible change appeared in their conversation for the better; so that among those that knew them best, they had acquired a settled reputation of a virtuous, religious people, a people that could be safely depended on, and confided in, for known probity and justice, for sobriety and temperance, and so closely adhering to that religion and worship of God, which they believed to be agreeable to his will, that when others fled from their persecutors to holes and corners, these resorted to
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their places of worship, though often to the loss of their liberty and their estates, and sometimes to the danger of their lives, which, as far as appears, they were ready to offer up for the testimony of a good conscience. A brave testimony to the power of that divine principle they freely preached to the world. Their belief in this principle was the true reason of that different success of theirs and others endeavours for the reformation of mankind; the one labouring only with the help, and under the conduct of a divine power, and recommending those among whom they laboured to the help of it: the other too much neglecting that, by their own study and application, and the observations they made out of the scriptures and other writings, compiled and read to the people lectures of morality, often good upon the matter of them, but without that virtue and energy, which is peculiar to those, whom God by his spirit calls, and qualifies, and sends forth to that work.

That this is not *gratis dictum*, spoken altogether at random, I might produce reasons by particular passages out of many of their sermons and writings, but I am willing to be sparing on that head, though the author I am concerned with has been very liberal to accuse the Quakers in that manner. Only I would put him in remembrance of what is well known to those who are acquainted with the controversies now on foot, that the writers on the side of Deism and Free-thinking have stuffed their performances with quotations out of their most noted writers, in favour of their notion of natural religion in opposition to revealed, and some other tenets of a pernicious nature to the Christian Religion. But I expect to be told that this would not be just according to that good rule already referred to, to judge
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of these authors from bits and scraps taken out of them at pleasure, and that by their adversaries. I allow it, and therefore, as I said, forbear: only with the reasonable expectation, that the same rule be inviolably kept to on all hands, and then the present controversy will drop of course, the shortest and best way.

But there remains one bar still in this author's account against the Quakers right of being treated upon the same bottom with others, viz. *That they are insincere in those professions they have made of their belief of the external facts of Christianity.*

There cannot be a more direct reason of precluding any persons from the common right of such an equal treatment than this charge. Let us see therefore, how truly it belongs to the Quakers. In order to it, let us consider, what are the best marks of sincerity; by what tokens may we know a sincere person or people from the contrary? I take it, a people may be fairly accounted sincere, who not only profess to believe a certain set of doctrines and principles, but are ready to suffer for them; nay, actually have suffered in body, estate, and even life too, without any prospect of worldly profit, honour or advantage whatsoever; but, as far as appears, contrary to all these. This was always esteemed an argument of sincerity in the primitive Christians, and is, according to that degree of suffering this people have endured, in the nature of the thing, an argument of their sincerity; and such sufferers they were, even for their obedience to the commands of Christ as manifest in the flesh, almost constantly till the death of King Charles the Second, in the cases of refusing to swear, to bear arms, &c. Now how is it possible that a people should suffer so deeply for these testimonies, and not be sincere in the profession of their belief in him who gave his

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disciples

disciples these commands? But after that time, our author would have it, they became, or at least some of them, insincere, tricking, designing people. How does he prove this? Why because some of those whom he had before thought fit to represent as erroneous, and deficient, in their belief of an outward Christ, had signed forms of confession consistent with that belief. These two being inconsistent, cannot be both true. This supposes, but does not prove, that those passages he has produced, are inconsistent with the belief of an outward Christ. The contrary to which has been already proved with respect to the first class of his testimonies. And the rest are more easily set aside. But my design being not to meddle with that part; I say, that supposing what I do not deny, that some of our first writers did allegorize upon the external facts of the Christian Religion, yet none of them all allegorized them away. So far from it, that it is utterly inconsistent with the nature of an allegory, and common sense, to imagine such a thing. For what is an allegory, but a translation of words from their proper meaning to a figurative one? At the same time preserving, not destroying the proper signification of the same words, and the facts on which they are founded, which are always supposed true; otherwise the allegory, having no foundation, is no allegory, but a mere fancy and imagination: so that to allegorize away any facts is a solecism in speech, words of no meaning. This being the case, those later confessions (if the first had not been explicit enough) are to be taken for a more express declaration of that which the first did not so fully declare, but suppose true; and ought in justice and charity to be esteemed explanations of them.

That

That the Quakers, as a people, always believed the coming of Christ in the flesh, their constant testimony against the payment of tythes is a demonstration; for which, the principal reason they have always rendered has been, *That as tythes were part of the legal dispensation, so they are abrogated by the coming of Christ in the flesh*: and farther, their refusing to swear, because oaths were forbidden by him: and to fight, because they esteem it contrary to his commands of loving enemies, and not resisting injuries, &c. Their doctrine and practice of the cross or self-denial in a more close manner, and greater degree than any other people, because he commanded it. I mention these things, because these are the known principles and practices of that people in general, in which they not only confess in words, but in works, (the best way of confessing) the outward coming of Christ, and honour him in the sincerest manner, by obeying his commands. Judge now, whether a confession from such a people, that they highly value the outward coming of Christ, ought not to be taken as a sincere declaration of their real sentiments, much more so, than that of some who cry, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he commands them.

I shall only mention one instance more, in which this people plainly attribute much greater honour to the coming of Christ in the flesh, than their adversaries, or indeed any others; even in that very case which was the great end of his coming, viz. The salvation of mankind; that is, by believing and declaring to the world, that the extent of it is universal, that he died for all men, and was a propitiation for the sins of the whole world, thereby rendering the salvation of all mankind possible. This is such a noble principle, so worthy of him that is the common parent of the

universe, the God of the spirits of all flesh, that I wonder all men should not readily fall in with it: but yet they are so far from it, that for this very reason, *viz.* for asserting the universality of the grace of God in order to salvation, through Jesus Christ, who by the grace of God tasted death for every man, in opposition to G. Keith, who denied it, and for excluding him the society for that and his contentious behaviour in it, our author accuses the Quakers of insincerity in their confession of 1693, before referred to. Strange! that those who declare the extent of the death of Christ to be universal, should be accused of flighting or making it void, in comparison of him, who confines the effects of it to a very small part of mankind.

But let us hear our author, p. 96. " I say, " that the great dispute in Pensylvania was about " the necessity of believing, in order to salvation, " in an outward Christ, as the very person that " was born of the Virgin Mary, and who as personally united to the Godhead is the true Christ, " and that the light within is not sufficient without " something else." Again, p. 97. he says, " He " (G. K.) upon his return maintained the same " doctrine of an outward Christ as absolutely necessary to salvation. And accordingly (after " great opposition from the other Quakers) was " excommunicated by their body, and stiled an " apostate by William Penn himself in 1695. So " that two years after the forementioned confession made by G. Whitehead and his brethren, " in which they pretended so highly to value the " distinguishing facts of Christ, we find that " George Keith was excommunicated by their " society for maintaining the necessity of believing in an outward Christ, in order to salvation." And p. 91. " They deny the necessity of the knowledge

“ ledge of, and faith in, an outward Christ, in
 “ order to salvation, in a firm dependance on
 “ the sufficiency of the light within, without
 “ any thing else; which is a scheme of infidelity,
 “ that evacuates the gospel as effectually as the
 “ most explicit system of Deism can possibly
 “ do.”

This is their insincerity, according to our author, that they acted contrary, but two years after, to that confession of faith delivered to the parliament in 1693, and in so doing, published to the world such a scheme of infidelity, &c. after pretending to be orthodox Christians. Contrary to all this, I undertake to shew, that our friends, in opposition to G. Keith, manifested a much greater regard to Christ, as outwardly born of the Virgin, crucified, dead and buried, &c. than G. Keith himself, or his adherents, and that without any the least imputation of Deism, explicit or implicit. In order to it, let us first settle the terms, viz. what is meant by these words, *The necessity of believing in an outward Christ in order to salvation*; and then, what is meant by *the sufficiency of the light within to that end*. As to the first, our friends, by denying the necessity of a belief in Christ in this sense, mean, that to those to whom Providence has made the knowledge of those external facts impossible, the knowledge or belief of them is neither absolutely necessary nor required. And obedience to the light within, that is to that understanding of their duty which God has given them, being all that is in their power, is sufficient to their salvation without such a belief. Though we ought to believe, as Christians, that even in their salvation, God has respect to the propitiatory sacrifice of Christ once offered for the sins of mankind on the cross. But the case is very different with those, to whom

Povidence has given the opportunity of hearing and reading, and consequently of believing those facts. To these, the belief of them is acknowledged by the people called Quakers, to be absolutely necessary; for it is impossible, that the light of Christ should deny Christ in any sense, but must bear testimony to him. This distinction, which is the real sense and doctrine of the people called Quakers in the case, establishes the universal extent of the death of Christ upon the only bottom on which it can be rightly established; and at the same time, the danger of Deism and Infidelity vanishes. For Deism (as that word is now applied) is the belief of a God, but denying all revealed religion among a people professing Christianity and revealed religion: which, according to the forementioned distinction, cannot be charged on any people professing Christianity.

Our friend Robert Barclay's * arguments at large in his 5th and 6th propositions, concerning the universal redemption by Christ, and also the saving and spiritual light wherewith every man is enlightened, are well worthy the reader's serious perusal. And it is observable, both in his shorter propositions themselves, as well as the explanation of them, he every where attributes the salvation of all that are saved, both heathens and others, to the death of Christ, as the procuring cause of it: the belief of which, in express terms, he makes absolutely necessary to all those, to whom the declaration of it has been conveyed. His words are, Apol. p. 141. edit. 1703. " We
 " do not hereby intend any ways to lessen or de-
 " rogate from the atonement and sacrifice of
 " Jesus Christ; but on the contrary, do magnify

* See likewise Richard Claridge's argument on the same subject, in his *Lux Evangelica*, p. 18, 19, 20, &c.

" and

“ and exalt it. For as we believe all those things
 “ to be certainly transacted, which are recorded
 “ in the holy scriptures, concerning the birth,
 “ life, miracles, sufferings, resurrection, and as-
 “ cension of Christ; so we do also believe that
 “ it is the duty of every one to believe it, to whom
 “ it pleases God to reveal the same, and to bring
 “ to them the knowledge of it; yea, we believe
 “ it were *damnable unbelief* not to believe it, when
 “ so declared; but to resist that holy seed, which,
 “ as minded, would lead and incline every one
 “ to believe it, as it is offered unto them;
 “ though it revealeth not in every one the out-
 “ ward and explicit knowledge of it; neverthe-
 “ less, it always assenteth to it, *ubi declaratur*,
 “ where it is declared. Nevertheless, as we firm-
 “ ly believe that it was necessary, that Christ
 “ should come, that by his death and sufferings
 “ he might offer up himself a sacrifice to God for
 “ our sins, who his ownself bare our sins in his
 “ own body on the tree; so we believe, that the
 “ remission of sins, which any partake of, is only
 “ in and by virtue of that most satisfactory sa-
 “ crifice, and no otherwise.”

It is amazing how to account for it, after all
 this, that our author should accuse R. Barclay of
 Deism, as he has done; or G. Keith insinuate that
 charge against the Quakers; for this had been
 published to the world many years before the dis-
 putes in Pensylvania with George Keith, and was
 well known to him. And it was for acting con-
 trary to this great fundamental truth, of the uni-
 versal extent of the death of Christ, to the disho-
 nour of his name, and contending for it in such
 manner, as to create rents and divisions in the
 church, and setting up for pre-eminence in it, that
 they excluded him the society. And their so
 doing, was so far from being inconsistent with
 their

their confession in 1693, that it was a strong confirmation of it: and therefore no argument at all of insincerity in those concerned therein, but the contrary.

I pass over his instance of Dr. Lancaster's queries, p. 100. seeing he has not thought fit to tell us what they are, nor what the answers to them were, but referred to George Keith, Lesley, &c. I think it sufficient to refer to the answers themselves, and what else has been writ by our friends on that occasion; and proceed to consider what he says is decisive of the insincerity of those thirty-one Quakers that signed the aforesaid confession of faith, which was offered to the parliament in 1693, viz. "That some inconsistent declarations were made by their body, or at least by the representatives of it, after the date of their said public confession; namely, that they still adhered to the doctrines and testimonies of their predecessors from the beginning," and quotes several yearly-meeting epistles to that purpose, p. 202, and 203. This being, as he says, decisive, seems to be a stunning blow at last. Let us however try if we can recover ourselves. It turns upon this single point, *That the doctrines and testimonies of our predecessors are inconsistent with the confession in 1693*; that is, with putting a due value upon the external facts of the Christian Religion.

By the doctrines and testimonies of our predecessors, he means such as arise from those particular passages picked and culled out of their writings, by him and other adversaries, with such meanings put upon them, as is agreeable with their design. This method of judging of the opinions of any writers, is, according to the Bishop of London, unsafe; and if allowed, would put it in

in the power of designing men, to make almost any writer speak what opinion they please: and therefore is by him, and ought to be by all reasonable men, justly exploded.

But he ought in common justice to have measured us by the avowed doctrines and testimonies of our friends before-mentioned, explained at large in our friend Robert Barclay's Apology, and more briefly, but very plainly, in a small piece of his, intituled, *A catechism and confession of faith*; wherein, in distinct chapters, the acts and offices of Christ, both as to his outward and inward appearance, are succinctly declared and set forth in scripture words only, (the best way of doing it). The first of which has had several editions by express order of the yearly-meeting; which makes it, though the work of a private person, in effect the work of the body of that people, as much as any thing can be supposed such. And the last has also been printed several times, both in English and Latin, for the benefit of our youth. Add to these, a treatise intituled, *The harmony of the Old and New Testament, and the fulfilling of the prophecies concerning our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*, by John Tomkins, with an appendix to the Jews, by William Penn; of which I have before me the third edition; wherein the prophecies of the ancient prophets, relating to the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the most remarkable circumstances of his birth, life, miracles, death, resurrection, &c. are placed in one page, and in the opposite, the passages out of the New Testament, by which it appears, those prophecies were fulfilled. And in the appendix, William Penn has recommended to the Jews, for their conviction, as to our Lord's being the Messiah, his miracles in the common and literal sense, And it is farther

ther observable, that this was first printed in the year 1693, the same year when the confession of faith was presented to the parliament.

After this, and much more to the same effect, which might be mentioned, to charge a people with insincerity, on account of some passages picked up at random, and those not justly represented, as hath been already made appear, both in the quotations of Patrick Smith's performance, as well as the author's under present consideration, is both highly unreasonable in itself, and contrary to that great and good rule of our Lord before mentioned.

I have been the more particular in considering and replying to this accusation of insincerity, because nothing can lay a people under greater contempt; nothing can be a greater bar in their way, to exclude them the common privileges of human society, much more of Christianity, than such an imputation justly charged and proved upon them: and, nothing tends more to ruin the reputation of a people, than such an accusation. Which, if true, I confess, ought to be exposed in its proper colours; but if not true, as there appears no manner of pretence for it, in the present case, such an attempt so circumstantiated, I am unwilling to give that name that properly belongs to it, but shall leave it to impartial judges, to think of it as according to the nature of the case it may appear to them; and shall only add, that as the people called Quakers have formerly given as good marks (what if I say the best marks) of sincerity, as any people in the time they have lived in, by constantly attending the worship of God, according as they were persuaded to be their duty, to the hazard of their liberty, property, and even life too: so if there be any such thing now in the world, or ever was,
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or will be, as true sincerity, it must be supported by that principle alone which they profess; which was that which gave the primitive believers that testimony to bear, *That in simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with *fleshly wisdom*, (that principle in which the conversation of too many stands) but *by the grace of God*, a true Christian principle, they had their conversation in this world.

Having thus far endeavoured, and I hope with success, to clear my brethren of that worst of imputations, *insincerity*, I shall conclude with a brief expostulation with the author I am concerned with, though I esteem myself under some disadvantage, in not knowing to whom I am addressing myself: however, be that as it will, I shall not designedly offend him; and at the same time he must excuse me, if I use such plainness of speech as the nature of the case calls for, by laying before his view, what appears to be the general tendency (not to say design) of his performance.

It appears then to me, upon a due consideration of the whole, that this performance is one steady, artful, laboured attempt, to represent the people called Quakers to the world, as erroneous in doctrine in the highest point, *The incarnation of the Son of God*; insincere, shifting, and evasive, in declaring their belief of it; moreover of dangerous principles relating to government. I say, the Quakers, without distinction: for though it is acknowledged, that he sometimes, in the progress of this work, distinguishes pretty carefully, the leading Quakers, the founders and heads of the Quakers, or the former heads of them, from the common part, the general body of that people, and from the present leaders, &c. yet he at last makes the charge general upon that people, even those of this generation, as well as their founders, as he is pleased to term them; by
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making them answerable for the unchristian tenets, and pernicious errors of their predecessors, as he expresses it, p. 5. unless they retract them, and consequently condemn their authors. This he insists on with much earnestness, p. 209, and 210. an expectation which, I believe, will never be answered, being unreasonable. But as to those meanings and representations which their adversaries have put upon them; these they have often, and are always ready to deny: but that such constructions do not belong to them, as he is pleased to refer with much satisfaction to the performance of a late judicious author Mr. Smith, in his Preservative against Quakerism, I also take liberty to refer, with the like satisfaction, to the judicious answer to that performance, by our friend Joseph Bessé.

But my business at present is to consider, what is the tendency of all this; for answer to which I need only have recourse to our author himself, p. 210. " They likewise will do well to recollect, " whether their refusal to renounce old errors in " a public manner can be any inducement in the " world, to think that they really perform those " conditions which qualify them for their toleration; which, as I am well assured, is not envied them by the Bishop of Litchfield; and " they will best shew they deserve it, by a condemnation of their ancient doctrines that are " inconsistent with it: and more especially, it " will be proper for them, to shew they have " made a good use of old favours of the legislature, before they expect to have any new ones." This, I confess, looks like shaking a rod over us. But if the Bishop's mind be truly represented, we have reason to be satisfied in this part, that the toleration we enjoy is not envied us by him: whose sentiments this author has several times told

told us, he is well acquainted with. But one would think, if this be the real sentiment of the Bishop, that the Bishop is not so well acquainted with the mind of this author, as the author with his; nor can he be supposed to approve of it, because this last passage is somewhat inconsistent with that good disposition of the Bishop, that he does not envy us our toleration. For if our author be really of the same mind with the Bishop, why must the world be amused with an insinuation at least, if not a direct charge, *That they the Quakers do not perform the conditions which qualify them for the toleration: That they countenance and profess doctrines inconsistent with it: That they have not made a good use of the favours of the legislature:* all which, if true, amount to thus much, *That the Quakers have forfeited their right to the toleration.*

I am unwilling to suppose that this was the real design of our author, viz. *To stir up the government to abridge us in any respect of the liberties and immunities we at present enjoy.* And we have good reason to believe, that such an attempt would prove fruitless, under the auspicious government of the king now reigning, or any branch of the present royal family; under whom, the civil and religious liberties and properties of the people have been inviolably preserved, by the best, that is, by legal securities. And I am well assured, that if the people called Quakers were convinced, as they are not, that they had made an ill use of the favours of the legislature, they would make no difficulty of retracting it.

But to return to our author, though, as I said, I am unwilling to suppose that he had any such design as I have mentioned; yet if we were disposed to put the worst construction on his whole conduct towards us in this performance, (a practice

tice which our adversaries have been notoriously guilty of towards our first writers) what I have already mentioned, and what follows, would bear such a construction; for let me ask him, to what end has he called in question the Quaker's loyalty, and spent seven pages on it, from p. 226, to the end, to prove them either useless or dangerous to civil government; which he acknowledges, p. 91, is foreign to the present subject; and therefore he was under no necessity to touch upon it: notwithstanding which, he takes occasion from a small passage of about three lines in an anonymous author, to represent them (instead of loyal subjects, as the letter-writer styles them) "As persons that pay the least obedience according to law.—Who are restrained by their narrow principles, that are consequentially destructive to government, from bearing arms in the king's service.—Who do not in fact give, and are not capable of giving, so full and clear proof of their fidelity to the government, as other liege subjects do, to whom an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife.—And likewise, in the case of tythes, can they be properly said to be loyal, who refuse to pay them, in obedience to the laws and constitutions that require them so to do?"

Upon all which, I take liberty to make one general observation: Are all, or any of these things new? Are they not as well known to the whole legislature, nay, to the whole nation as to himself? Have not the government kindly provided some relief for this people in their tender and conscientious dissent in several of these particulars? For which they are humbly thankful. And if so, to what end does this author now bring forth these things in public, which are not done in a corner, but are already as well known, as it is possible

possible for him to make them: and yet I have not understood, that the people called Quakers have been taxed with disloyalty on these occasions, by the king, or any in authority under him. On the contrary, the legislature were pleased to declare in the preamble to the act for granting the people called Quakers, such forms of affirmation or declaration, as may remove the difficulties some of them lie under: *That it is evident, that the said people called Quakers have not abused the liberty and indulgence allowed to them by law; and they have given testimony of their fidelity and affection to his majesty, and the settlement of the crown in the Protestant line; and it is reasonable to give them farther relief, &c.* See the act *Anno Regni Georgii Octavo.*

From whence we may hope they take them to be, not disloyal, (which would be highly ungrateful) nor altogether useless subjects, notwithstanding what he is pleased to call their narrow principles. Upon which I take the liberty to recommend the generous example of the legislature to the clergy, and others, possessed of tythes; that inasmuch as the government hath enacted a law, by which their claims of that kind may be recovered, in an easy way to both parties, that they would not make use of that ruinous, expensive, and more uncertain method, which I need not mention, to recover them, to the impoverishing of some families. I persuade myself, did they but compare this procedure which has been often put in practice of late, with that great and good rule already referred to, and consider themselves in the place of these sufferers, they would esteem themselves hardly dealt with.

But that which gives us the more disagreeable view of this author's objections to our loyalty, is, that he is conversant with our yearly-meeting

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epistles,

epistles, (as appears by his citations out of them) from which he must needs have been better informed. Did he not observe in the epistle for 1730, this paragraph?

“ And in regard we have been favoured by the government, with the enjoyment of our religious liberties in common with other Protestant Dissenters, and in an especial manner relieved by the legislature, in several cases which peculiarly concern us as a people; we therefore think ourselves obliged earnestly to advise all friends, that they be particularly careful to behave with all dutifulness and gratitude, and especially to discountenance every the least appearance of indecent freedom, or mark of dissatisfaction in word or writing, relating to the government.”

And in the epistle for 1732 is the following clause: “ It is very acceptable to us to find, by the accounts from the several parts of the kingdom, that (according to former exhortations of this meeting) friends continue generally careful not to defraud the king of his customs, duties, or excise; and so far to discourage such practices, as to avoid dealing in goods reasonably suspected to be run. This is a care highly commendable, and no doubt incumbent on every honest subject: but as the government hath signally favoured us in our religious liberties, we are under the greater obligations of gratitude as well as duty, to manifest, that we are as truly conscientious *to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's*, as to support any other branch of our Christian testimony.”

Also in the yearly-meeting epistle for 1733, the same duty is again recommended in these words: “ The good accounts we have received of friends care in general to keep themselves clear of de-
“ frauding

“ frauding the king in any of his customs, duties,
 “ and excise, are very acceptable to us, and we
 “ do, as formerly, so now again, recommend the
 “ continuance of a duty so necessary and incum-
 “ bent on every good and faithful subject, being
 “ expressly commanded by Christ himself, *Render*
 “ *therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's.*
 Mat. xxii. 21.

I mention not these things either of choice, or
 by way of boasting; but they are, as it were, ex-
 torted from me, as necessary to shew the author I
 have to do with, that he has not done well, in
 attempting to fix his brand of disloyalty on that
 part of the king's peaceable subjects, who give as
 evident demonstrations of their fidelity to the pre-
 sent government, as any society of people he can
 name.

There remains but one accusation more against
 our people, which I shall briefly take notice of;
 which consists of some quotations out of several
 of our elder friends writings, in the time of Crom-
 well's usurpation; by which he would represent
 them at one time as enemies to kings, at another
 time to parliaments, sometimes to the house of
 lords, and sometimes to the house of commons:
 which he would have our people of this genera-
 tion retract, in these words, p. 228. “ It will by
 “ no means misbecome them, to join a retrac-
 “ tation of the illegal and destructive doctrines of
 “ their predecessors, in civil and political con-
 “ cerns, to their condemnation of their old reli-
 “ gious errors.” Which retractation he makes
 necessary, p. 231. “ In order to vindicate them-
 “ selves from any imputation on them, by which
 “ they will best erase the real stains they have
 “ contracted, by making themselves answerable
 “ for their predecessors.” Or, as in the next
 page, *making their supposed errors their own.*

The reason of this expectation, (if there be any reason in it) depends again on this general maxim, That in a religious society, whenever any of their leading members, in any time past, have spoke or writ amiss in civil or political concerns, their successors, seventy, or eighty, or an hundred years after, are obliged to retract those errors of their forefathers, at that or any other distance of time, or else they become answerable for them, or make them their own. This maxim, if it be true at all, is true universally, of all societies as well as the Quakers. I persuade myself, that the unreasonableness of such a charge against our friends, grounded on such a maxim, appears at one view to all reasonable people.

But to put this affair in a true light, let it be observed, what is notoriously the case: that in those times of public confusions, the people of England were so unhappily situated, that some or other of all parties or societies, had, in a greater or lesser degree, a share in them, or more or less contributed to them; and when things became settled again, they endeavoured each to cast the blame on the other: whereas they ought to have endeavoured to come into a healing temper towards each other, and by degrees to forget those unhappy breaches which those state-convulsions had made in the nation, by the exercise of mutual charity. Which I confess could not be reasonably expected should completely effect the work of reconciliation of all parties immediately. But after so long a time, when that generation is so long since extinct, and our present national happiness is such, that all societies, however differing in other matters, agree in the present wise establishment of our constitution, which is now brought to an happy settlement on its right foundation: at such time as this, to re-
vive

vive the old exploded proverb in Israel, viz. *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge*; and that against a people who contributed nothing at all to these things: (for the fatal blow was struck before there were any such people heard of as Quakers). I cannot conceive with what design: impartial judges, I doubt not, will think it no kind one, whatever glosses our author may varnish it over with.

I would ask him, would he, as a member of the church of England, esteem that church justly dealt with, if the political ravings of Sibthorp and Manwaring, or the destructive counsels of the great prelate of that time, which in some measure, laid a foundation for what afterwards followed, should be now trumped up and made a crime in the present government, or members of that church? If this be unreasonable with respect to them, as I acknowledge it to be, it is much more so in the case of the Quakers: and therefore I request this author to reconsider his conduct in this particular, and compare it with that excellent rule of our Lord, several times referred to, viz. *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

The people called Quakers esteem themselves under the strongest obligations, both of duty and gratitude to do all that is in their power, consistent with their peaceable and Christian principles, for the support of our present national constitution; and they are well satisfied, that more than this the government does not expect from them. And therefore I am at a loss to find out from what motives these new efforts are made, either by the Bishop of Litchfield or his defender, to represent them erroneous in point of religion, and wrong in politicks; when the government, upon a mature consideration of the

matter, have long since declared themselves satisfied in both these points. And they are not sensible, that by any late act of undutifulness, they have forfeited the favours so kindly bestowed on them. And therefore it may be hoped, that this author, upon a review of his performance, will see cause to think it unseasonable.

As to what concerns myself, as I know, that in my first appearing in this manner, I had but one thing in view, which was, *To recommend to the world the most necessary, and yet the most neglected, part of the Christian Religion*; so I leave the success of this my sincere endeavour to the great author of it, without whose blessing, all our endeavours, however well intended, will be fruitless and ineffectual.

A N

A P P E N D I X,

CONTAINING

*Some Remarks on a Passage in the Second Volume
of BISHOP BURNET'S History of his own Times.*

SINCE the foregoing sheets were committed to the press, I have met with a passage in the second volume of Bishop Burnet's History of his own times, just published, which I esteem necessary to take some notice of in this place: It is in p. 248, and 249, as follows. *Anno 1700.*

“ The Quakers have had a great breach made
“ among them by one George Keith, a Scotch-
“ man, with whom I had my first education, at
“ Aberdeen. He had been 36 years among
“ them. He was esteemed the most learned man
“ that ever was in that sect. He was well versed
“ in the oriental tongues, in philosophy and ma-
“ thematicks. After he had been about 30 years
“ in high esteem among them, he was sent to *
Penn-

* It is observable, that while George Keith was there, he published a notable defence of the Quakers in answer to Cotton Mather, who had charged them in the same manner as Keith himself did afterwards. This defence, intituled, A serious Appeal, was printed at Philadelphia

“ Pennsylvania, (a colony set up by Penn, where
 “ they are very numerous) to have the chief di-
 “ rection of the education of their youth. In
 “ those

in 1692, the same year wherein he began to let in that spirit of prejudice and contention, which hurried him into measures he had just before condemned in others. His real sentiments of the Quakers in that appeal, being as just a defence of that people against his own subsequent attempts, as they were then against those of Mather, we have thought proper here to transcribe.

Serious Appeal, p. 6. “ Notwithstanding Cotton Ma-
 “ ther’s strong asseverations against us, as if we denied al-
 “ most all, or most of the fundamental articles of the
 “ Christian and Protestant faith, yet he shall never be
 “ able to prove it, that we are guilty of this his so ex-
 “ tremely rash and uncharitable charge, either as in re-
 “ spect of the body of that people, or in respect of any
 “ particular writers or publishers of our doctrines and
 “ principles, and preachers among us, generally owned
 “ and approved by us, as men of a sound judgment and
 “ understanding. And for his citations out of the Qua-
 “ ker’s printed books and treatises, I would have you to
 “ consider, that most of them all are borrowed, and
 “ taken not from our own books, but from our pro-
 “ fessed adversaries, men known well enough to be pos-
 “ sessed with prejudice against us, such as Thomas
 “ Hicks and John Faldo, and others, whom our friends
 “ in Old England, and particularly George Whitehead
 “ and William Penn have largely answered.”

Ibid. p. 7. “ It sufficeth to me, and I hope doth to
 “ many others, that according to the best knowledge
 “ I have of the people called Quakers, and these most
 “ generally owned by them, as preachers and publishers
 “ of their faith, of unquestioned esteem among them, and
 “ worthy of double honour, as many such there are; I
 “ know none that are guilty of any one of such heresies
 “ and blasphemies as he accuseth them. Yet we deny
 “ not but, as it hath happened, and doth daily happen,
 “ to writers and preachers belonging to all other socie-
 “ ties, so it may have happened to some among us, to
 “ have at times in writing or speaking delivered things,
 “ not

“ those parts, he said, he first discovered that,
 “ which had been always either denied to him, or
 “ so disguised, that he did not suspect it. But
 “ being far out of reach, and in a place where
 “ they were masters, they spoke out their minds
 “ plainer; and it appeared to him that they were
 “ Deists, and that they turned the whole doctrines
 “ of the Christian Religion into allegories; chiefly
 “ those which relate to the death and resurrection

“ not so warily and cautiously worded in every respect,
 “ as need were: but in this case, all but prejudiced per-
 “ sons will say, if it can be found by comparing their
 “ words one with another, that their sense or meaning
 “ is found, though not so altogether safely or cautiously
 “ worded in every respect, charity is to be allowed, and
 “ the best construction ought to be given to their words,
 “ or they themselves, or their friends for them, in re-
 “ spect of their absence or decease, who did best know
 “ them, ought to be allowed to give their sense for them,
 “ as I have done in the sincerity of my heart, according
 “ to my best understanding and knowledge of them; and
 “ I think, I should know, and do know, these called
 “ Quakers and their principles, far better than Cotton
 “ Mather, or any of all his brethren, having been con-
 “ versant with them in public meetings, as well as in
 “ private discourses, with the most noted and esteemed
 “ among them for about twenty-eight years past, and
 “ that in many places of the world in Europe, and for
 “ these divers years in America.”

Hence it appears, that George Keith, after divers years intimate acquaintance with the most noted and esteemed of the Quakers in America, had not discovered those errors among them, which he afterwards pretended. He had certainly far better opportunities of knowing the real thoughts of that people from a close, free, and familiar conversation with them 28 years together, than he could possibly have afterward, when personal piques and prejudices had raised his passions against them, and led him into the practice of the same unjust and perverse methods which he had so rationally censured in other adversaries.

“ of

“ of Christ, and the reconciliation of sinners to
 “ God by virtue of his cross. He being a true
 “ Christian, set himself with great zeal against
 “ this : upon which they grew weary of him, and
 “ sent him back to England. At his return he
 “ set himself to read many of their books, and
 “ then he discovered the mystery which was for-
 “ merly so hid from him, that he had not ob-
 “ served it : upon this he opened a new meeting,
 “ and by a printed summons he called the whole
 “ party to come and see the proofs he had to of-
 “ fer to convince them of those errors. Few
 “ Quakers came to his meetings, but great mul-
 “ titudes of other people flocked about him.
 “ He brought the Quakers books with him, and
 “ read such passages out of them as convinced
 “ his hearers that he had not charged them
 “ falsely. He continued these meetings, being
 “ still in outward appearance a Quaker for some
 “ years, till having prevailed as far as he saw
 “ any probability of success, he laid aside their
 “ exterior, and was reconciled to the church,
 “ and is now in holy orders among us, and like-
 “ ly to do good service in undeceiving and re-
 “ claiming some of those misled enthusiasts.”

Thus far the Bishop. Upon which it may be
 observed, that the only foundation of this story,
 so far as concerns the Quakers, was George Keith's
 bare relation of it ; for it is introduced with
 these words, viz. In those parts, he said, he first
 discovered, &c. It does not appear that the Bi-
 shop either read or heard what the people called
 Quakers had to say for themselves ; and yet as if
 he certainly knew that George Keith was perfect-
 ly right, and these people altogether wrong, he
 pronounces judgment upon an hearing only *ex*
parte ; a method of proceeding utterly inconsistent
 with the duty of a fair historian ; and which he
 himself,

himself, no doubt, were he living, would loudly exclaim against, if it concerned himself, or any people whom he was disposed to favour, or even to do justice to.

It is well known, that the difference between George Keith and his friends in Pennsylvania, was, upon an appeal of his from thence, solemnly heard and debated for many days by the yearly-meeting in London, 1695, and at last determined in a moderate * censure upon him; and it cannot be supposed but that the meeting had some reasons

* Which censure was in the following words, viz.
 “ That the said George Keith hath of late been, and
 “ yet is, acted by an unchristian spirit, which hath mov-
 “ ed and led him to stir up contention and strife in the
 “ church of Christ, and to cause divisions, separations,
 “ and breaches among them that profess the truth: and
 “ that the tendency of divers of his late writings and
 “ actings hath been to expose the truth and the friends
 “ thereof, to the reproach of the world, did unanimouf-
 “ ly agree, and declare it to be the sense and judgment
 “ of this meeting: and it is the sense and judgment of
 “ this meeting, That the said George Keith is gone from
 “ the blessed unity of the peaceable spirit of our Lord
 “ Jesus Christ, and hath thereby separated himself from
 “ the holy fellowship of the church of Christ, and that
 “ whilst he is in an unreconciled and uncharitable state,
 “ he ought not to preach or pray in any of friends meet-
 “ ings, nor to be owned or received as one of us, until by
 “ a public and hearty acknowledgment of the great of-
 “ fence he has given, and hurt he hath done, and con-
 “ demnation of himself therefore, he gives proof of his
 “ unfeigned repentance, and does his endeavour to re-
 “ move and take off the reproach he hath brought upon
 “ truth and friends, which in the love of God we hear-
 “ tily desire for his soul’s sake.”

From which censure, it is evident, that George Keith was not (as the defender of the Bishop of Litchfield and Coventry erroneously asserts, p. 98.) “ Excommunicated
 “ by the Quakers, for maintaining the necessity of be-
 “ lieving,

ons for such a proceeding. And it is as well known, that afterwards, though our friends did not attend his peremptory summons, (chiefly with regard to the * peace and good order of those

“ lieving in an outward Christ in order to salvation.” Nor does there appear in the whole censure against, or proceedings relating to him, the least footsteps of any charge of that nature. He was disowned for his unchristian and uncharitable actions, and for the reproach he had brought upon truth and friends, by his slanders and lying accusations, and particularly, as it is expressed in one part of the proceedings, “ His insinuating as if “ friends only owned the blood of Christ in a mystical “ sense.” No wonder then, if Keith, being ejected by the Quakers, for his falshood and abuses of them, did, as evil men and seducers used to do, wax worse and worse, kept on the exterior of the Quakers, as a decoy to draw others after him, so long as he saw any probability of success, or outward support; which at length failing, he thought meet to be reconciled to a church, qualified to gratify her new convert with present and constant pay, which yet, in his case, was not the reward of righteousness.

* See their reasons for not attending Keith’s summons, in Sewel’s History of the Quakers, p. 660. One of which reasons is thus: “ Such public and unlimited “ meetings are too often attended with heats, levity, and “ confusion, and answer not the end desired by sober and “ enquiring men. Besides, that it sets up a practice that “ authority may judge to be an abuse of our liberty, and “ so draw that under reflection, as no friend to the ci- “ vil peace.” They conclude thus: “ Be it known “ unto all, That for the sake of religion, the liberty “ granted us, and the civil peace, we decline to “ meet him; and not from any apprehensions we have “ of his abilities, or our own consciousness of error, “ or injustice to the said George Keith, whose weak “ and unbridled temper we know is such, that what “ learning and parts he hath, have not been able to “ balance and support him on less occasions, so that “ we may say, they are all in ill hands; and if he pro-
“ ceeds

those cities and places where he was pleased to mount the stage) yet they followed him closely from the pews: and as all these transactions were public to the world, the Bishop ought either to have said nothing about them, or more than he has said; either have passed the whole over in silence, or have given an impartial summary view of the controversy on both sides.

But seeing he has been pleased to be silent on one side, and condemn us as a company of misled enthusiasts, with his usual air of contempt, that his readers may not think our friends had nothing to say in defence of themselves and doctrines: they are referred to what was written about that time by our elder friends, G. Whitehead, T. Ellwood, B. Coole, R. Claridge, D. Philips, and J. Wyeth.

But we are told, that it appeared to him, (George Keith) that they (the Quakers) were Deists, and that they turned the whole doctrines of the Christian Religion into allegories.

To the first, that they were Deists: I say he is inconsistent with himself, for he calls them afterwards Enthusiasts. Deism and Enthusiasm are as opposite as the two poles. The one denies all revelation; the other believes and contends for it to an excess. But to come more closely to the point, Deism, in the modern use of that word, is the belief and profession of na-

“ceeds as he begins, they will be employed to an ill
 “end, which his, (poor man) cannot but be, unless he
 “change his course, which we heartily pray for, that
 “a place of repentance he may find, and through a true
 “contrition, the remission of his great sin of envy,
 “and evilly entreating the Lord’s people and way which
 “we profess, and which he the said George Keith hath
 “long and lately both professed and zealously vindicated as such.”

tural

tural religion, in opposition to revelation of all kinds. Christianity, in the sense of the people called Quakers, is the belief and profession of revealed religion, revealed externally in the Holy Scriptures, and internally by the Spirit of Christ in the secret of our hearts: by the first we come to the knowledge of the facts, doctrines, and precepts of the Christian Religion; by the last we are enlightened and assisted to understand, apply and practise them, for the great ends for which they were delivered to the world: so that religion, in the sense of the Deists, hath nothing to do with revelation; in the Quaker's sense, it is all revelation, either external or internal: a plain contradiction then between the one and the other, and consequently they cannot be the same, nor be predicated of the same person or people. The Quakers therefore cannot be esteemed Deists, which charge is so far from being true, that upon their principles only, the very root of Deism is destroyed, as I have already observed.

Again we are told, That it appeared to him, George Keith, that the Quakers turned the whole doctrines of the Christian Religion into allegories.

Answ. I can name many of the doctrines of the Christian Religion which they never turned into allegories, but have been great sufferers for adhering to them in a literal sense, as is well known; so that this charge, in the extent of it, is false. But it is not denied, that the Quakers writ of some of the doctrines of the Christian Religion in an allegorical stile, and so did the apostles, even those very doctrines he there mentions, which relate to the death and resurrection of Christ, and the reconciliation of sinners to God by virtue of his cross, as may easily be made appear

appear by many instances. And the best Christians in all ages have done the same, as is acknowledged by the Bishop of London in his Pastoral Letter before cited. But neither those, nor the Quakers did so turn these doctrines into allegories, as to destroy their proper meanings, or the reality of those facts, which are always supposed, and taken as a real foundation for the allegory, and so professed and believed by that people.

Those who have read the writings of our friends with an honest disposition to be truly informed of their real sentiments, and who have conversed with them candidly with the same design, have found the truth of this. Among whom the learned and pious Dr. Henry More was an eminent instance; who, though at first he thought the Quakers carried their allegorical way of writing too far, yet upon better information from reading, and conversation with some of them, became very much changed into another mind, as hath been fully shewn in a late pamphlet, intituled, *A Vindication of the Quakers, or an Answer to the Bishop of L——s charge against them, and a late defence of that charge; to which is added, a more full and perfect account of the Quakers and their doctrines, occasioned by Dr. Henry More's opinion of them; containing extracts of several letters of the Doctor to William Penn and others, to which the reader is referred; and more largely to the letters themselves, and other passages, in his life and works.*

There is also good reason to suppose, that Dr. Burnet had changed his sentiments of the Quakers, when it is well known, that he long since published to the world an excellent system of spiritual religion, altogether agreeable to their principles,

ciples, intituled, *The Life of God in the Soul of Man, or the nature and excellency of the Christian Religion, with the method of obtaining the happiness which it proposes: also an account of the beginning and advances of a spiritual life: with a preface by Gilbert Burnet.* Wherein he very strongly and pathetically recommends that performance, the design of which is to explain the nature and properties of true religion, which the author calls, p. 4. An union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle's phrase, it is Christ formed in us. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be better expressed, than by calling it a divine life. The very terms in which the Quakers often express themselves on the same subject. And therefore as the Bishop has so fully recommended that work to the public, however he might be misled by wrong representations of their doctrines, he could not be an enemy to the principles of the Quakers rightly understood. The whole of that piece is penned with that true spirit of religion and piety, that I gladly take this opportunity to recommend the perusal of it to all serious Christians of all denominations.

But to return to George Keith. The Bishop has told us, after a long detail of his performances, *That he is now, in the year 1700, in holy orders among us, and likely to do good service in undeceiving and reclaiming some of those misled enthusiasts.* But what if it should appear after all, that he deeply repented of what he had done? I shall relate what has come to my knowledge, and leave the reader to judge of the truth of it. The fact as related is this: That one Richard Hayler of Suffex made a visit to George Keith on his death-

Death-bed, which visit was kindly taken by him; and among other things that passed, *G. Keith* expressed himself in these words, viz. *I wish I had died when I was a Quaker, for then I am sure it would have been well with my soul.* This I have from a person now living, of unquestioned reputation, who had it from the widow of the said *Richard Hayler*, and her sister, both since deceased, but persons of unblemished characters. I shall make no comment upon the expression, but only remark, that it stands on as good ground of credibility as many thousand matters of fact that are readily believed without any hesitation, and is altogether as well, what if I say, better attested, than the Bishop's partial relation of this whole affair, and some other facts in his history, wherein the characters of all ranks of people, living and dead, are treated with an uncommon freedom. I hope, therefore, I may be excused in this one instance, at a time when *George Keith's* performances against the *Quakers* are so much magnified by the Bishop of *L——*'s defender, as well as *Dr. Burnet*, in letting the world know, that there is reason to believe, that this conduct of *George Keith*, at last became his burthen, and that he himself did not approve of it: the consideration of it, I confess, gives me some secret pleasure, in hopes, that he that gave him this sight, might give him also the grace of repentance.

F I N I S.

B O O K S

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